

THREE PLAYS BY CHI-JIN YOO

respect both for the influences from which he draws his inspiration and for the characters he invents. This is an instance of intercultural exchange that merits close attention for the degree of scruple which informs every level of interaction.

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The Cow

In Three Acts
(1935)

CHARACTERS

GOOK-SEO: A tenant farmer, fifty years old.
WIFE: GOOK-SEO's wife, forty-seven years old.
MAL-DONG: Their elder son, twenty-six years old.
GAE-DONG: Their younger son, twenty-three years old.
GOOK-JIN: GOOK-SEO's cousin, thirty-five years old.
GUI-CHAN: A neighbour girl, seventeen or eighteen years old.
DOL-YI: GUI-CHAN's father, in his forties.
THE LANDOWNER'S AGENT: An agent of the landowner.
YOO-JA: The third daughter of the House of the Citron Tree, nineteen years old.
WOO-SAM: A neighbour.
YOUNG-SIL: A neighbour.
MOON-JIN: A neighbour, nicknamed 'Thick Beard.'
OLD WORKER
MR. MOON: A young worker.
COW DEALERS A, B and C
Others: Workers, neighbours, neighbour girls, children, wine deliverer etc.

Sometime in the 1930s.

A farmhouse in Korea.

The barn is on stage left, the yard is on stage right. From the left wall of the barn, there is a door leading to the room. The porch is in front of the room. The passage leading to the backyard lies through and behind the barn. An open gate, which makes a boundary between the house and street, is upstage right. A few red persimmons are hanging on a tree, stage right.

ACT ONE

The sound of people threshing is heard from the backyard of the house; shouting and singing. MAL-DONG, the elder son, an old bachelor with dishevelled hair in a pigtail, is sitting on a mortar. He has covered himself with a straw sack and is trying to hide behind the mortar, having decided to put no more effort into farming from now on.

GOOK-SEO: *(from the backyard)* Maldong! Maldong! Where's that damn boy? *(Comes out through the barn)* . . . Where's that damn boy? He sneaked off without helping with the harvest. And it's such a busy time!

WOO-SAM: *(enters)* Hello, Gook-Seo. How's the threshing going?

GOOK-SEO: It's not bad. Let's go to the fields and share a glass of wine.

WOO-SAM: It seems everybody is having a good harvest. This really is a good year!

WOO-SAM *exits to the backyard. GAE-DONG lazily wanders along the road outside the wooden fence. He is wearing a Western-style sailor's shirt and cap.*

GOOK-SEO: Gae-dong! You good-for-nothing! What are you doing lazing around on such a busy day? How can you let your healthy body do nothing but wander around idly? You know damn well there is so much work that I'm hiring people to help. We need every available hand! Where in hell has your brother gone?

GAE-DONG: *(bluntly)* No idea.

GOOK-SEO: Oh, I should just do away with you both! What's the use of having sons! God is to blame for them being such layabouts. It's God's mistake.

GAE-DONG: Father, why are you pestering me? How can you expect me to work on the farm? I'm a sailor. Give me my fare to go to sea. The life here bores me to death.

GOOK-SEO: What's so wrong with helping your poor father, even though you're a sailor? The farming work is not so hard that it'll break your bones.

GAE-DONG: . . . Look, father. Let's sell your cow to pay for my trip. I'll go to the harbour and make more money. Then I'll come back. I promise. It'll cost only thirty Won.

GOOK-SEO: Sell the cow? Just listen to this senseless idea! You're

crazy. This is no ordinary cow. You know that our cow's father won first prize at the County Show. Pull yourself together. First prize! Do you think I could sell the cow just like that with her famous name and good breeding? Of course not! Don't you look down on that cow just because she's a worker. She's of great value in farming for us, and our neighbours.

GAE-DONG: Father, business is going on in Manchuria. This is the time to make the most of such a good opportunity.

GOOK-SEO: For goodness sake! You were once a sailor, so you put on a Western suit and your hair oil, and you think you can make money so easily. Ha! From the start, get that notion out of your head. Now, go and clean the barn. And find your brother and tell him to come right now.

GAE-DONG: . . . Father, but look . . .

GOOK-SEO: Quickly! Why can't you do as I say?

Reluctantly, GAE-DONG goes to the back of the house. From stage-right, the WINE DELIVERER enters carrying a barrel of wine on his shoulder.

WINE DELIVERER: Here's the wine!

GOOK-SEO: Oh, thanks. Did you by any chance see our Mal-Dong on your way here?

WINE DELIVERER: No, I didn't.

GOOK-SEO: Where is that damn boy?

GOOK-SEO, *leads the WINE DELIVERER out through the barn.*

MAL-DONG: (*crossly chewing the straw sack*) Father tries so hard! But he can't just call and force me to go to work as though he's calling a dog. Hell! Why should I work? Why struggle to make more gruel when it ends up on someone else's table? It doesn't fill my stomach. Father can kill me. I won't work!

The sound of threshing from the barnyard has ceased. The workers' voices are heard, singing harvest songs. MOON-JIN appears at the entrance of the barn.

MOON-JIN: (*calling out to everyone*) Come on, have a drink! (*No answer is heard as he looks around*) No one is around. (*Goes out*)

MAL-DONG: (*grumbling*) To guzzle and get rowdy is all they know

how to do. Idiot!

The workers' voices are heard from the backyard.

A fruitful year has come.
A fruitful year has come.
To the rivers and the mountains,
A fruitful year has come.
A hay day hay la,
Oh what a delight!
Oh yes
You are my love.

Through the entrance of the barn, MOON-JIN and WOO-SAM can be seen dancing.

MAL-DONG: How stupid! I can hardly bear to watch them when they act so foolishly! Oh, what a grand sight! They think there will be something left for them to eat from our great harvest.

MAL-DONG *lies down again pulling the straw sack over himself. MOON-JIN comes out from the barn dancing and swinging his shoulders.*

WOO-SAM: (*accompanying MOON-JIN*) The old proverb says, "After the hell of the Sixth Month passes, the heavenly days of the Eighth Month will come." Those words are so true in years like this with such a good harvest. Only a fool would complain of being a farmer. Don't you agree, Thick Beard?

MOON-JIN: (*swings his shoulders sarcastically*) Sure, sure. The spring wind is everywhere. (*Laughs*)

YOUNG-SIL: (*drinking from a gourd filled with wine and holding a piece of kimchi, comes out from the barn*) Ah, this wine tastes good. Gook-SEO, we'll be threshing tomorrow. If you're not too busy, come over. I'll treat you to as much as you can hold.

GOOK-SEO: (*enters from the barn*) Don't worry, I'll be there.

WOO-SAM: As the saying goes, 'Farming is the fundamental means of maintaining the nation and the world in peace.' Is that not right, Thick Beard?

MOON-JIN: Oh, don't sound so old-fashioned. I think this one is better. "He who farms dies of hunger." Ha ha ha . . .

WOO-SAM: (*laughing with MOON-JIN*) . . . I'm quite drunk. Gook-

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Seo, I'm going home. (*On his way out, he meets THE LANDOWNER'S AGENT, the supervisor of a tenant farm, who comes in from stage right*) How are you, sir?

THE LANDOWNER'S AGENT: Well, well. Woo-Sam, you're pretty drunk, aren't you?

WOO-SAM: If I can't get drunk now when the harvest's good, when can I get drunk? Last year I couldn't because there was so little rain and the harvest was poor. And the year before that, there was too much rain. (*Exits triumphantly, singing a harvest song*)

WIFE: (*finding THE LANDOWNER'S AGENT by the entrance of the barn*) Come in and have some wine, please.

THE LANDOWNER'S AGENT: (*getting a gourd of wine*) The taste is good. Where is Gook-Seo?

WIFE: Probably out at the threshing ground.

THE LANDOWNER'S AGENT: (*slyly*) Well, it seems the harvest is pretty good this year so there will be more sacks of rice than last year, I suppose.

WOO-SAM: Certainly! The spring wind is everywhere.

WIFE: How can we ever compare this year with those last two terrible years?

THE LANDOWNER'S AGENT *exits through the barn to the threshing ground. The people follow him out.*

MAL-DONG: (*alone*) . . . Oh, that wicked fellow. He's trying so hard to flatter us, thinking he can get a few grains of rice out of us.

MAL-DONG *drinks a gourd of water and sits on the wooden mortar. The WIFE and the WINE DELIVERER come out from the backyard. The WIFE pays for the wine. The WIFE and the WINE DELIVERER go out in a hurry. GOOK-JIN enters through the barn.*

GOOK-JIN: (*to the WIFE*) Cousin, would you mend this gourd for me? (*Hands the gourd to the WIFE and exits*)

WIFE: Even this little chore is a big nuisance at such a busy time. Well, let me see. Is there any string around to sew with? Oh, yes. I put the hemp string on the shelf. (*Discovers MAL-DONG while she is looking for a footstool to climb up to the shelf*) For God's sake! You've been hiding here for all this time and we didn't know it. Why in the world are you sitting here looking like old granny face who just lost her son? Look at yourself! That hair of

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yours looks exactly like a wild bird's nest. You're a sight! You layabout, wait until your father finds you like this! You'll get a good beating with a sickle. Go to the backyard and help with the threshing. And for heaven's sake, stop being so difficult. If your father blames you, just tell him you were sick and had a rest in your room.

MAL-DONG: I won't work. Leave me alone! Why should I work? We won't get enough to eat anyway.

WIFE: How can you say that? Remember you're a farmer and don't talk such nonsense again. Now get up! Think of your age! Are you a one or two year old child? (*MAL-DONG does not move*) Oh, dear, get up right now!

DOL-YI, *a middle aged farmer, enters.*

DOL-YI: Why are you fussing at your son?

WIFE: Now, listen to this. On a busy day like today, he should be helping with the threshing. Well, he sits in here shouting, "Why should I work? We won't get enough to eat anyway." Have you ever heard a farmer talk such nonsense? He's the black sheep of the family. Either he's gone mad or something must be wrong. He's a farmer. How can he be so lazy? He doesn't realise how lucky we are. There are plenty of people who don't even have land to cultivate. God will punish him.

DOL-YI: Maybe he's unwell. Mal-Dong, are you feeling bad or something?

WIFE: He certainly isn't. Yesterday I prepared a meal from the new harvest. He finished his share of a huge bowl of rice, then he took my share and ate it, too. He also breaks wind all day.

DOL-YI: Do you think you are tired from too much work, is that it?

WIFE: Where did you ever see a farmer lie in bed because he is a little tired? He would be a king if he could afford to do that. I'm sure some kind of bad spirit got in his soul. I would like to take him to a shaman. A farmer must work hard during the whole autumn. He was all right until last night. He's strong enough, he has a good appetite, but suddenly he has been acting like this since this morning. He also refuses to eat.

DOL-YI: So you've been dumb like this since this morning? If something's bothering you, say so openly.

WIFE: His illness is in his soul. After the harvest, I will have a ritual ceremony to the Earth Spirit to chase the devil out of him. Otherwise, nothing can cure him.

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MAL-DONG *flops down under the persimmon tree.*

DOL-YI: Even if he's not ill, he must have some reason to be like that.

WIFE: Leave him alone. Let him die wasting away like a sick cow.

DOL-YI: But we must try to find . . .

WIFE: No, it's enough. Anyway, can you hand me down the hemp string on the shelf? Even this little gourd makes me nervous at such a busy time.

DOL-YI: (*hands down the hemp string to the WIFE*) By the way, I came by to borrow your flail. I have no way to live except by selling a bundle of beans.

WIFE: It's hanging over there in the barn.

DOL-YI: (*hands down the flail*) How about this year's harvest? Everybody in our town has done well. We've plenty of farming water this year. Damn it! I was almost a beggar in the lean years we've had recently.

WIFE: If you have a good harvest, the landowner will definitely not leave you alone. He has to collect his long-term debts and the rent for the land. The year with a good harvest is a bit worse than when the harvest is poor.

DOL-YI: (*in a low voice*) By the way, did you hear the rumour? A new law called the Farm Law will be introduced from next year. The farmer must pay off all his previous debts before the harvest season. If not, the landowner will try to evict him and take his land and house and so on.

WIFE: My family has had to face that trouble since the spring. Damn it! I don't know what I can do.

DOL-YI: That's why my wife and I decided to sell my daughter, Gui-Chan.

WIFE: Gui-Chan? You mean your modest girl?

DOL-YI: That's the only way to solve the problem. If I don't pay our debts, the moneylender will come and claim everything I own. If I don't sell Gui-Chan, I'll lose my property and all my family will starve to death.

MAL-DONG: (*pretends to speak to himself but loudly*) . . . What does it matter if you lose the land? Damn it! I haven't seen any family live well after they've sold their daughter. (*Exits*)

WIFE: (*looks at MAL-DONG*) You idiot! He's off his head. . . . So have you already made an agreement and signed and sealed everything?

DOL-YI: I agreed on a contract for two thousand Won. Recently so

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many people want to sell their girls, so it is not easy to find a buyer. Mr. Nakamura in town took care of all the paperwork. Gui-Chan will be sold to Japan. I've already got one thousand Won as an advance, and I've signed the paper.

WIFE: Your daughter can help all your family to overcome their problems. I've two grown up sons but they both break my heart. The younger one has been at sea, wanting to be a sailor. Since he returned home, he has looked down on farming. The elder one used to work hard until yesterday but suddenly he's been lying around like a sick cow . . . This is a bad omen for my family. If not, how can I understand what's going on.

DOL-YI: (*stands*) Well, when she was born, my wife named her Gui-Chan which means 'nuisance' because she was a girl. But look at us now. How could we have ever imagined she would do us a favour. (*Laughs*)

WIFE: Nobody knows the way it goes. Everything turns out differently, not as you expect it to. I suppose every parent should wish for a daughter instead of a boy. Anyway, would you like some wine in the backyard?

DOL-YI: Wine? You think there's any left?

When the WIFE brings DOL-YI to the backyard, GOOK-JIN enters holding a sickle.

GOOK-JIN: Is the gourd ready? For heaven's sake, finish it quickly, please.

The WIFE and DOL-YI go out through the barn. GOOK-JIN sharpens the sickle on the whetstone.

Pause.

From stage right, the singing of YOO-JA is heard.

YOO-JA: *Holding a bottle of whiskey under her blue skirt runs to the oak wood to find her lover.*

A few stones come flying onto the stage from the stage right. One of them hits YOO-JA. YOO-JA shrieks.

GOOK-JIN: (*shouts angrily to stage right*) You monstrous boys! Why are you throwing stones?

YOO-JA: (*enters from stage right, smiling and touching her injury*) . . . They threw them for no reason at all. They seem to think

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I'm a mad girl. Giggle . . . (*Throws the stones back*)
GOOK-JIN: I guess you're drunk again. You're reeling.
YOO-JA: I got some wine from Im-Soon's harvest field. You know, whenever I get drunk, I miss my Najimi in Seoul. He has black eyes, he always wears a red neck-tie . . . (*Sees the WIFE who comes to the barn*) How are you, ma'am? Do you know where Gae-Dong is? Huh?
WIFE: Why are you looking for Gae-Dong all the time? You'll catch it if my husband learns about it.
YOO-JA: Don't say that to me. If you do, Gae-Dong will not take care of me either . . . I don't care. If I love him, that will be enough . . . (*Exits feebly singing and crooning*)
GOOK-JIN: (*holding the sharpened sickle*) She's in a bit of a state. (*Exits to the backyard*)
WIFE: (*to DOL-YI, pointing to YOO-JA from the entrance of the barn*) You know her, don't you? The third daughter of the House of the Citron Tree. She was sold to the red-light district in Seoul five years ago and she was living there. Now look what's happened to her. She's lost her spirit and looks completely crazy. She was a clever girl when she was young . . .
DOL-YI: The place where my Gui-Chan will go to work is a nice place. She's going to Japan.
WIFE: You're right. Japan is a wealthy country. It's definitely better than Korea. I heard that everybody who went to Japan became rich. Look at the Gil-Seon family. They didn't even have a penny but became wealthy after their second son got a labouring job in Japan. Gui-Chan's case is better than his case. She is a clever girl. If she has a bit of luck, Gui-Chan may find a kind husband.
DOL-YI: (*laughs*) That's more than I can wish for. I can't imagine that kind of good luck. I just hope Gui-Chan will not be like Yoo-Ja in the future. If their daughter returns home like that, how can the parents stand it?
GUI-CHAN *enters*.
GUI-CHAN: Father, what are you doing? We were waiting for you to bring the flail. The beans are still spread out all over the ground.
WIFE: Hello, Gui-Chan. I heard you're going to Japan. You must be excited.
DOL-YI: I'll be seeing you. I've been telling you meaningless stories. I'll bring back your flail soon.

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GUI-CHAN and DOL-YI *exit with the flail*. The WIFE *mends the gourd alone*. Meanwhile, GAE-DONG *enters from the backyard*. He has been working in the stable.
GAE-DONG: Mother!
WIFE: Have you finished cleaning the stable?
GAE-DONG: Well, just about. Uh . . . by the way, mother, . . .
MAL-DONG *enters*. He *strolls in absent-mindedly and sits down under the persimmon tree*.
WIFE: (*looks at MAL-DONG for a while and at GAE-DONG*) What's the matter with him? Why does he have a wrinkled face like a dried leaf all the time?
GAE-DONG: Who knows? Maybe he wants to get married. He hasn't got anybody to satisfy his needs. That's probably why he's got so lazy.
WIFE: Do you think he wants to get married?
GAE-DONG: I don't know. Leave him alone. He's upset so you'll get stung. By the way, mother, I want to talk to you about something. It's about our cow. What would you think of selling her? It isn't a bad idea, is it? Mother, would you suggest it to father when he's in a good mood? Please.
WIFE: You fool. Do it yourself. Do you want to see a thunderbolt falling on my head?
GAE-DONG: I've already suggested it to him several times, but he never listens to me. It's like talking to a wall. Tell me the truth, what's the use of keeping that cow? It would be different if the cow was still useful, pounding grain or pulling the cart. But these days, there are mechanical flour mills and lorries go into town day and night. What good does it do us, there is no benefit from feeding a cow? How can we give some beans to that cow when we have nothing to eat? It's pointless.
WIFE: Be sensible. Don't you realise how much your father thinks of that cow? More than his family! He's always saying, "Feed the cow well, even if we don't have enough to eat. The pride of a farmhouse is the cow." Haven't you heard him saying that all the time?
GAE-DONG: Nonsense. We can work in the field without our own cow. If we have the money to feed our own cow, if we sell it we can rent someone else's any time we need one. That's much more sensible. That's what all our neighbours do.

WIFE: You'd better give up your idea. Stop all those wild ideas now and put your mind to working on the farm. Where can you find the sort of place where people make so much money? You were spoiled at sea.

GAE-DONG: I'm not good at farming . . . Mother, listen! I'll go to Manchuria if we sell the cow. I can make more money there. You know, making money in Manchuria is easy as pie. I heard there are so many ways to make money. Think about it. If we stay here and farm, we've no chance of improving our living standards. We need to make some money to live a better life. I don't think we can make a big fortune but we can have good meals three times a day. Am I right, mother?

WIFE: (*feeling tempted*) . . . Can you really get a good job in Manchuria so easily?

GAE-DONG: Absolutely. Did you hear the news about Mr. Park's eldest son? He made a huge fortune in such a short period. He made all that money in just two years in Manchuria. Just two years!

WIFE: Should I suggest it to your father?

GAE-DONG: Will you? Really? You're my mother!

WIFE: Ask him in a very nice, reasonable way. And I'll do the same.

GAE-DONG: Try and persuade him, mother.

WIFE: I'll try. . . Oh, that's it finished. I have to take this gourd to the threshing ground. Gook-Jin said he needs it in a hurry. (*Exits to the back stage with mended gourd*)

GAE-DONG: (*with delight*) It'll be all right! If mother really pushes father, he'll definitely listen to her. As soon as we sell the cow, I'll take the money and rush to Manchuria. That's the best way to live. Let me get some fodder for that cow now. When the buyer comes, if she looks well I can get more money for her.

MAL-DONG: (*stands up and bars GAE-DONG from going*) Don't be so stupid! So, you think you're going to deceive mother with such smooth talk? Then you'll get rid of the only cow the family has. You can't do it.

GAE-DONG: Is it your cow? It's none of your business. Get out of my way!

MAL-DONG: That's enough of your cheek. Go and get a job at sea. That'll be the best job for a chap like you.

GAE-DONG: You know nothing about the business. As foolish as you are, how can you know what's happening in the outside world? You're a good for nothing. Stay under that persimmon tree while I go and make money in Manchuria.

MAL-DONG: Oh, what can I do with you! I could step on you and kill you! (*Grabbing GAE-DONG's neck*) You, go to hell! Stop your dreaming, fool. You can't make money so easily.

GAE-DONG: Let go of my neck! (*Tears himself away from MAL-DONG forcefully, and runs*) You're a soldier in front of the troops. Keep your nose out of my business. Don't interfere with my plan! (*Runs around to the back of the house*)

MAL-DONG: Oh . . . you . . . I could just. . . (*When he chases GAE-DONG out, MAL-DONG bumps into THE LANDOWNER'S AGENT who comes out with GOOK-SEO from the barn. MAL-DONG turns away quickly and runs after GAE-DONG*)

GOOK-SEO: (*shouting*) Mal-Dong! So you've appeared at last, you lazy fellow! Where have you been hiding all this time?

WIFE: (*voice only*) Stop fighting, both of you! Don't cause such a commotion!

GOOK-SEO: (*to THE LANDOWNER'S AGENT*) I'll start measuring the rice early tomorrow morning. Please come again tomorrow. It's already dark today and the harvest is nearly finished.

THE LANDOWNER'S AGENT: (*in a friendly way*) OK I'll be back tomorrow. By the way, Gook-Seo, you ought to give me the rice you owe me from last year and the year before last. That'll be two and three-quarter sacks of rice from last year, and three and a quarter sacks from the year before. This time I don't want you to forget even a single grain of rice. Just do what I said when I brought the landowner to work out how much it'll be. Understand?

GOOK-SEO: I'll try my best.

THE LANDOWNER'S AGENT: What do you mean 'try'? You have to pay back all of it, so I can save my face in front of the landowner. As you know very well, we had such a bad harvest the last few years. As the agent, it's really hard to meet the landowner face to face.

GOOK-SEO: Let's not talk about the bad harvest years. My heart has also been burning like yours. Especially during the drought of last summer . . .

THE LANDOWNER'S AGENT: As a farmer myself, I can understand the feeling of a tenant like you. As the proverb says, 'One can face the death of one's own child, but can't stand to see one's own crops dying.' I realise your difficulties. But when you pay me my share, you should be generous. To be frank, it's for your own good being generous to me. Do you know a conversation between me and the landowner can greatly affect you and your

rice paddies? Your field can even be taken away for good because of his decision. Tenant and agent should always stick together. This is a natural law of living.

GOOK-SEO: I know what you mean. I'll be seeing you. If possible, come early tomorrow.

THE LANDOWNER'S AGENT goes out laughing cynically. GAE-DONG enters, being chased from behind the house by MAL-DONG.

GAE-DONG: (looking for a place to hide) Father, look at my brother! He's hitting me for nothing! He wants to marry . . . (MAL-DONG appears, chasing GAE-DONG)

GOOK-SEO: Damn it! You should have been helping with the work, not bothering the others! (To MOON-JIN, who is working in the barn) You, Moon-Jin! Will you get Mal-Dong? (MOON-JIN holds MAL-DONG tight) You caught him. Send him to me. (Takes MAL-DONG) Now, you tell me what sort of day this is! I don't know what to say. All I can do is grind my teeth. How can I treat this chap? . . . You know, damn well this is the busiest day in the whole year? How can you be so childish? Moon-Jin, bring me a fire beater. I'll beat this chap black and blue.

MOON-JIN: At last you get what you deserve, boy. (Looks for a fire beater)

WIFE: (coming out from behind the house) Serves him right! He needs a good beating!

GAE-DONG: (provokes MAL-DONG) I know why. He wants to get married, that's the reason. That's why he is all hot under the collar . . . Why are you taking it out on me, you fool? I'm not the person who will be blamed if you don't get married.

GOOK-SEO: Get married?

MOON-JIN: Ha ha . . . Not getting married? That's your deep-seated ambition. Oh, yes, you're not a boy any more.

GAE-DONG: Yes, I know what he wants to do. He really wants to get married. What does he look like!

MAL-DONG: (trying to get away) Let me go! Making a fortune in Manchuria is more difficult than you think, Gae-Dong. I'll kill you, if you don't watch out! (MAL-DONG tries to lunge at GAE-DONG)

GOOK-SEO: (with a fire beater) Don't bother your innocent brother! Why do you fight but not work? You're old enough to work. You know, the threshing day is the busiest day of the year. How can you act like this? Tell me. What's the matter? Do you really

want to get married? If you're a man, you must tell the truth whatever you you're faced with.

GAE-DONG: Good punch! He asked for it. How can you interfere in my affairs like this? (Shouts from the barn entrance) Hey, everybody! Come and watch this! (People come out from work and watch)

WIFE: (to GAE-DONG) You, foolish boy, why do you want to make your brother angry like this? Go away! (To MAL-DONG) Well, son, tell me. Is it true? Do you really want to get married?

MOON-JIN: Oh, he's reached a certain age so his heart is longing for a girl.

WORKER A: Boy, there's nothing to be ashamed of. It's the natural law God planned for humans. Mal-Dong, tell us what's going on.

OLD WORKER: Even if you get beaten to death, you must tell the truth.

WORKER A: That's right. Please tell us straight, Mal-Dong.

GOOK-SEO: Oh, that blockhead! You, you're like a pancake, how can you be so stubborn now? (Tries to hit MAL-DONG once more)

MAL-DONG: (turns to GOOK-SEO) Here. Beat me as much as you want. I want you to hit me so that I can die . . . I want to die

WIFE: Oh, heavens! Don't just beat him! Don't force him like an animal. I think what Gae-Dong said is right. Mal-Dong wishes to get married. That's why he's sick. So why can't we ask him in a reasonable way? Son, is there a girl you've set your eyes on? If there is, say so. Well, if you're too shy to tell me in front of these people, whisper it quietly in my ear. There shouldn't be any secrets between you and me. Now, I ask you, while you were out in the field feeding the cow, did you ever meet a girl picking the vegetables?

MAL-DONG: (suddenly crying without answering the question)

People watch MAL-DONG surprised and suddenly burst out laughing.

MOON-JIN: Gaga . . . I'm sure he has a secret. Look at his tears.

WIFE: Come on now. You're got a secret, haven't you?

OLD WORKER: If you have a secret, say 'yes' clearly. It's common in our town that a boy and girl share a secret. Do you know Mr. Kim's daughter who lives over the bridge? She was in a situation like yours while she was raking up in the mountain.

WORKER A: You're right. It's very common in life. Special feelings often start from minor and ordinary things.

OLD WORKER: There's no need to be shy about it. What's your secret?

WORKER B: Mal-Dong, you're so tenacious. You're like a stubborn cow.

GOOK-SEO: Are you at a loss for words? Why are you just standing there like a statue? Oh, you're a good-for-nothing.

WIFE: (to GAE-DONG who is standing beside MAL-DONG) Oh, yes, Gae-Dong, you can tell me the story. Tell me what you know. Who's the girl your brother wants to get married to? You know who she is, don't you?

GAE-DONG: I don't know. How can I find out his secret?

GOOK-JIN: (coming onto the stage from work) What's going on? What's happened?

WIFE: Look at that Mal-Dong. He wants to get married. That's why he's lazing around all day.

GOOK-JIN: The horn grows on the rear of the plain calf. That idiom suits him.

GOOK-SEO: It's not so simple. If Mal-Dong just wanted get married, I don't think he'd break down like today. Maybe he's been rejected or the girl he had in mind went to somebody else . . .

YOUNG WORKER: (enters from work) Don't you know about your son? I saw Mal-Dong carrying Gui-Chan's load yesterday when she was going to the bean field. (MAL-DONG cries once again)

GOOK-SEO: In the bean field? Gui-Chan? You mean my neighbour girl.

YOUNG WORKER: That's right.

GAE-DONG: I saw he met Gui-Chan secretly last night under the persimmon tree. Yes, last night.

WIFE: Why didn't you let me know earlier? You're no better than your brother.

GAE-DONG: I would catch it if Mal-Dong found out I'd given away his secret. You don't know, mother. Mal-Dong is as strong as Hercules.

GOOK-SEO: (hits MAL-DONG's cheek) You, stupid fellow! You're been getting your pleasure on the sly. Oh, no, you're not a boy any more so you have been following a girl trying to tempt her. You're a bad egg.

WIFE: Dol-Yi popped in here just a little while ago. He said that he sold his daughter Gui-Chan to Mr. Nakamura in town. Nakamura will send Gui-Chan to Japan.

GOOK-SEO: To Japan?

OLD WORKER: Dol-Yi hits the jack-pot!

YOUNG WORKER: Mal-Dong, you heard this story from Gui-Chan last night, under the persimmon tree, didn't you?

MAL-DONG: (nods his head) . . . Yes. She said she's leaving for Japan for a fee of two-thousand nyangs. She told me under the persimmon tree. That stupid girl! That crazy girl! That damn girl!

SPECTATOR: Two thousands nyangs? That's a good price.

GOOK-SEO: Mal-Dong, have you two ever promised anything to each other? I mean, like getting married and living together?

MAL-DONG: She gave me a solemn promise to live together after we talked to mother and father. And then, that girl did . . .

WIFE: Be sensible. She has been sold because her family has a debt to pay. They haven't paid the rent for the land for the last two years. It was a bad harvest.

OLD WORKER: Gook-SEO, then you pay the debts for Dol-Yi. Then you can save the girl.

GOOK-SEO: How can I pay the debts for him? My situation is no better than Dol-Yi's.

WIFE: I heard that Dol-Yi got the money in advance and that he's already spent it. What's more, he's already made a contract and signed it.

MJN: That's it then if he's already signed the contract. You've missed the boat. Am I right, old chap?

OLD WORKER: Yes, there's no way. A contract is a contract.

WORKER A: Ask Dol-Yi anyway. Gook-SEO, you have a cow. It'll be good to use as credit.

GOOK-SEO: It's too late, Mal-Dong. If I had the money to spend on your marriage, I'd give it to the passers-by. I've no power to cancel the contract and I cannot afford to pay their debts. You couldn't make that sum of money, even if you worked for the rest of your life.

GOOK-JIN: Boy, you have to be sensible. Forget the girl! Collect your wits and put your mind on your work!

WIFE: That's what I want to say, son. Meanwhile, you can choose another girl. If you get back to work, I promise I'll let you get married. Listen to me, boy.

OLD WORKER: That's the best idea. And Gui-Chan is not the only girl in our town. If there's one thing we've enough of, it's girls.

MAL-DONG: Ah, none of you know my feelings! Bad girl! Damn girl! I'm going to jump into the well and kill myself!

MAL-DONG tries to get away between the onlookers.

THREE PLAYS BY CHI-JIN YOO

WIFE: Stop him, please. What can I do if that fool really throws himself into the well?

MJN: He may not. Just leave him.

GJN: Don't worry about him, sister.

WIFE: No, he's a real blockhead. He could kill himself. Oh, what will I do if he dies?

GOOK-SEO: Damn it. Do you really want to make trouble, Mal-Dong? There's no way. Moon-Jin, tie him up so he cannot move an inch. And throw him into that room. Tie him up!

The workers catch MAL-DONG and after a struggle, they tie him up.

GOOK-SEO: If possible, throw a bucket of water over Mal-Dong to make him see sense.

WIFE: Don't do that. He's not a boy, he's a mature adult. Look at him. He's trembling because of his anger. How can you throw cold water over him?

GOOK-SEO: No problem. Don't make our sons so spoiled. Go ahead, Moon-Jin.

MOON-JIN throws a bucket of cold water over MAL-DONG.

WIFE: Oh, no, he'll catch a cold. He'll probably faint because of the cold!

GOOK-SEO: Throw him into the room. (MAL-DONG is shut up in the room after a short struggle) He's unwell. All right, I'll bring an acupuncture doctor and ask him to treat Mal-Dong with the most painful remedy.

WIFE: Oh, no, it'll be too painful.

GOOK-SEO: Good grief! I've never seen anything like this before. Farmers can't be so fussy about choosing a girl? How can my son give me such cheek? What? Getting married? It's so simple, if someone happens to meet a girl, they get married and live their lives together. In this country, only young masters from the noble class can be so particular about getting married. Understand? Only young masters, who have both glory and wealth!

MAL-DONG's moaning is heard from the room.

WIFE: I'm afraid we'll kill him like that. He's not a strong boy! He has only a puffy body like a cotton ball, without any muscles . . . , Oh, can you hear the moaning?

THE COW

MJN: Oh, dear, look through the keyhole? Mal-Dong is passing water on the floor.

GOOK-SEO: What? My shirt will be soaked. How can a boy who passes water on the floor get married?

WIFE: He's in a state of shock. You threatened him, didn't you? Please let him go, please.

GOOK-SEO: Never! I'm still angry. Think about his laziness during the day. I must treat him like this. It's better for the future. If I forgive him just like that, he'll ignore me again sometimes. Look, everybody, it's time for the threshing. Let's get back to work. Oh, the day is almost gone because of that fool.

MOON-JIN: (to the WIFE) I know what! Let's bring Gui-Chan here and show her to him. Then, he'll feel better right away. I'm sure that's the best remedy. It never misses the mark.

WORKER A: (laughs) That sounds reasonable.

MJN: Haven't you heard that song? It's popular at the moment? 'The best thing for the draughty gap in the sliding door is a stack of bank-notes, the best thing for the frivolous old bachelor is . . . '

OLD WORKER: Ha ha ha . . . Thick Beard cracks jokes wherever he goes.

Laughing and joking, the WORKERS and NEIGHBOURS who have been watching this scene leave. The WIFE shouts to the girls who have been watching the scene beyond the wall.

WIFE: It's not a spectacle. Time to go home girls, Draw some water and prepare supper for your family.

Girls leave laughing. On stage only GOOK-SEO, his WIFE and GOOK-JIN remain.

GOOK-JIN: Brother, you cannot solve this matter by scolding Mal-Dong. We know his personality.

WIFE: Yes, he's so stubborn.

GOOK-JIN: Brother, what do you think of going to Gui-Chan's house to see what the situation is? If we let them know Mal-Dong is anxious to get married to Gui-Chan, they may reconsider their decision. Let's beat our brains. Let's try to find the best solution in any case. If you do just as you want, you'll rock the boat. Am I right, sister?

WIFE: You can say that again. We should resolve the matter using reason.

GOOK-SEO: No! It's beyond us. I'm sure that's the last thing her family wanted to do. There was no other way for them. I know their situation quite well.

GOOK-SEO: No! We can't do anything for them since we don't have enough money to pay their debts. But they should know that they're throwing their girl into the mud.

WIFE: I know it's impossible, but we can ask them anyway.

GOOK-SEO: Don't try anything. It's useless. I'm going to teach that boy a lesson!

GOOK-JIN: Anyway, I'm going to Gui-Chan's house to let them know what our wishes are. *(Goes out toward the road)*

GOOK-SEO: You shouldn't do that. Gook-Jin! Gook-Jin!

GOOK-JIN *exits hurriedly*. GOOK-SEO *follows him out, trying to stop*
GOOK-JIN. *The WIFE prays, setting a bowl of holy water on the centre stage.*

WIFE: *(prays)* God of the Earth and God of the House! Please, by your most virtuous nature, let my son marry as he wishes. Please solve the problems of Gui-Chan's family and make my son's wishes come true.

The desperate wail of MAL-DONG is heard from the room. The joyous song of the harvest is heard from behind the house.

ACT TWO

The following morning.

The stage setting is the same as in the first act. THE LANDOWNER'S AGENT, sitting on the floor of the porch, is doing accounts with counting sticks. The WIFE is busy giving fodder to the cow. MOON-JIN appears in the road with an A-frame carrier on his back.

MOON-JIN: I've come for the wages I earned threshing for you yesterday.

WIFE: Thank you for working so hard. Aren't you tired today?

MOON-JIN: Where's Gook-Seo?

WIFE: Over there. He's with The landowner's agent doing the accounts on the porch. Why don't you go there and ask for your wages?

MOON-JIN: *(comes into the yard, to THE LANDOWNER'S AGENT)* How are you, sir. Good morning, Gook-Seo, what's the result of your harvest this year? Isn't it much better than last year?

GOOK-SEO: Well, a bit. But I still have so much rent to pay to the landowner from last year and the year before. Even though it's a good harvest it's killing me!

MOON-JIN: Hmm, the spring wind is everywhere!

THE LANDOWNER'S AGENT: *(with a very cold attitude, unlike in the first act)* Thick Beard, you're always repeating that ridiculous phrase about the spring wind. I'm sick and tired of hearing it! *(To GOOK-SEO)* If you have business with him, finish it now and send him back.

GOOK-SEO: *(getting out a coin from his pocket)* Let me see, this is all I have now, Moon-Jin. Would you take a bundle of hay for the rest of the money I owe you?

MOON-JIN: Well, I would rather have the cash, if possible.

GOOK-SEO: I'm sorry, but this is all I have.

MOON-JIN: Oh, well, I'll take the hay then. *(Puts the A-frame carrier on the ground and turns to the WIFE)* Do you have some straw rope? I forgot to bring it to tie the hay.

WIFE: *(looking for the straw rope)* It seems Mal-Dong threw out all our rope when he was cleaning the house this morning. Oh, here's some. Can you tie up these two pieces?

MOON-JIN: *(tying two pieces of rope together)* Oh, how about Mal-Dong? Is he all right now? Did he recover from his sham illness?

WIFE: Don't say it like that. I was seriously considering a shaman

ceremony for him but he was out of his bed soon after he heard the words. 'You can get married.' He's very grateful, so today, he's been working so hard since dawn.

MOON-JIN: What? How can he get married?

WIFE: Dol-Yi already spent a thousand nyang. The money he got in advance. So we'll pay it back and save Gui-Chan.

MOON-JIN: What was that? Will you pay that huge sum of a thousand nyang?

WIFE: We want to save Gui-Chan, so who else can pay her family's debts? And Dol-Yi knows that he can make money for his family by selling her. He's frightened after seeing Yoo-Ja.

MOON-JIN: Oh, Gook-Jin wheedled Dol-Yi.

WIFE: Yes. Dol-Yi said that if we pay one thousand Nyangs, he'll happily keep Gui-Chan. Dol-Yi also said that he doesn't mind losing the tenancy rights for his land even if he becomes like a beggar.

MOON-JIN: If he doesn't want to sell Gui-Chan, that's good. But how can he cancel the contract? Mr. Nakamura won't allow it.

WIFE: Mr. Nakamura confirmed that he can cancel the contract if he gets the money back. Gook-Jin went to his office and asked him about this matter. Gook-Jin told me that Mr. Nakamura said 'O.K. Give the money back to me. If I have enough money, I can find as many beautiful girls as I want.'

MOON-JIN: That all makes sense. But how can you find one thousand nyangs? Will you sell the cow?

WIFE: No, no. How can we sell the cow? We did not even agree to pay Gae-Dong's travel costs to Manchuria so that he could try to make a fortune. After we finished breakfast this morning, we sent Gook-Jin to town to borrow some money.

MOON-JIN: To cut a long story short, you'll buy the girl and give mercy to your good-for-nothing son. Oh, what a brilliant idea! (GAE-DONG comes onto the stage and peeps into the house from the entrance of the shed)

WIFE: Who is there? Gae-Dong?

MOON-JIN: Let me see. You said Dol-Yi is afraid about his daughter's future that's why he gave Gui-Chan's hand to Mal-Dong. But that's not everything.

WIFE: What do you mean?

MOON-JIN: If you were someone else, he wouldn't have given his girl even if that person did pay his debts.

WIFE: What's so good about my family? Why can we get the girl?

MOON-JIN: You should know. You've got a fortune. I'll tell you. He's

thinking about your cow. That's the real reason why Dol-Yi accepted your proposal and gave Gui-Chan to Mal-Dong.

WIFE: That's very likely. As tenant farmers, only two families in this town have their own cow. Yoon-Soon and us. So people consider us very rich.

MOON-JIN: It's a wonderful world. There's nothing you can't do with money. Well, so how is Mal-Dong doing? Is he helping with the work now?

WIFE: He got up this morning before daybreak and weighed all the crops and threshed yesterday on his own. And then he swept the house, picked up the cow dung, and carried out manure from the outhouse. Heavens! I've never seen anyone change so much, so suddenly. Today he's a different person from yesterday.

MOON-JIN: (laughs) What a mischievous lad!

WIFE: Things are strange these days! The young men today are so different from our generation. Think about how positive in their ways the young men of today are! If they are pleased with something, they're extremely cheerful. But when they're displeased, then they're sullen and moody right away. I know he's a blunt young man, but think about what he did yesterday. I can't imagine what the other young men would do if . . .

MOON-JIN: You're right.

WIFE: Look, here comes Mal-Dong! Look at him smiling? Don't you see how radiant he looks?

MAL-DONG appears carrying a load on his shoulder. When he crosses the stage, MOON-JIN stops MAL-DONG and makes fun of him.

MOON-JIN: Oh, Mal-Dong, you look so good. Tell me what your girl feels like.

MAL-DONG: I'm so busy now.

MOON-JIN: Well, didn't you have a rough time yesterday?

MAL-DONG: Stop joking with me. Mother, I'm going to the field now. And prepare fodder for the cow, please.

MOON-JIN: Certainly. You'd better feed that cow well. She's your wedding dowry.

MAL-DONG: I don't want to hear any more from you. Ha ha . . . (Laughs with joy)

MAL-DONG goes out. MOON-JIN and the WIFE burst into laughter over MAL-DONG's behaviour.

THREE PLAYS BY CHI-JIN YOO

MOON-JIN: (*grabbing his stomach*) Ahhhh . . . Don't make me laugh too much, boy! Oh, my goodness, my stomach! How can anyone change like that?

WIFE: (*laughing with MOON-JIN*) Yes, it's really too much!

THE LANDOWNER'S AGENT: (*looks sharply at MOON-JIN and the WIFE*) Be quiet! How can you be so noisy? You've messed up all the counting I've done!

GOOK-SEO: Stop laughing you two!

WIFE: (*stops laughing*) I'm laughing so much I've got tears in my eyes. (*Wipes her tears away*)

MOON-JIN: Well, shall I take some hay? Is the haystack in the back yard?

WIFE: Follow me.

The WIFE exits through the barn with MOON-JIN.

THE LANDOWNER'S AGENT: Look, forty-five stone, plus three stone two point two pounds, minus eleven stone five point seven pounds, that makes thirty seven stone seven pounds. That's right, isn't it? Now, let me think. You also owe two stones two pounds from last year and three stones two pounds from the year before last. You've paid one point one pounds for this year, so that's four points seven pounds all together. Well, Gook-SEO, what are you going to do? When the landowner came here last time, you promised him you would pay the whole debt out of this year's harvest.

GOOK-SEO: . . . I know, but . . .

THE LANDOWNER'S AGENT: Listen! You can't just say 'I know, but . . . ' and expect to let it go like that. Keep your eyes open!

GOOK-SEO: But you know I've done my best for you.

THE LANDOWNER'S AGENT: What a nerve you have saying that! Well, if you don't have enough rice to pay me, you can replace it with soy beans, red beans or even with millet. Whatever your situation is, you must pay all your debts soon. You're still thirty-seven stone short. And that's it as far as I'm concerned.

GOOK-SEO: But I've already paid most of my old debts. In fact, there hasn't been a half grain of rice left in my house since I paid you that time.

THE LANDOWNER'S AGENT: In the last few years I've heard that story often enough, frankly, it's coming out of my ears. I'm sick of it. It's useless to say that again. Let's go out to the yard. Come on, let's count the rice sacks in the back yard. And let me remind

THE COW

you, the share you're paying me this year isn't good enough, either. I'm a little bit upset about it.

GOOK-SEO: I did my best. For goodness sake, how can you say that? I paid the same amount . . .

THE LANDOWNER'S AGENT: What do you mean 'same amount'? Why don't you remember what you promised me last year? 'If it's a good harvest next year, I'll treat you generously.' Didn't you say that? Did you?

THE LANDOWNER'S AGENT goes out angrily to the backyard. GOOK-SEO follows him out. Pause.

While there is nobody in the house, GAE-DONG sneaks in with COW DEALER A, who is around thirty years old.

GAE-DONG: (*in a low voice*) Come on, no one is around now. It's a good chance.

COW DEALER A: (*hesitates to come in*) Are you sure it'll be all right?

GAE-DONG: Yes, come in quickly! Don't be like a duck in a thunderstorm! Look sharp!

COW DEALER A: You told me that we'll be in trouble if we're found out. I really don't want to deal in business like this.

GAE-DONG: I know this is a risky deal, so I guarantee you'll do well out of it. All I need is my travel costs. If I can make it, I don't care if you give me just the price of a dog.

The sound of people approaching is heard from the back stage. GAE-DONG and COW DEALER A quickly hide behind the fence. MOON-JIN and the WIFE enter from the barn. MOON-JIN carries a load of hay on his back.

MOON-JIN: Why is The landowner's agent so fed up today? He's quite different from yesterday at threshing time.

WIFE: He's annoyed because he couldn't collect as much as he wanted from our harvest.

MOON-JIN: (*laughs*) The spring wind is everywhere.

WIFE: Now, we've paid all we owe you. That's right, isn't it?

MOON-JIN: Oh, yes. Don't worry. (*Exits*)

WIFE: (*talks to herself*) . . . Goodness, The landowner's agent's started fussing again. I'd better go and see.

MOON-JIN exits to the right. The WIFE goes out through the barn. GAE-DONG and COW DEALER A appear again.

GAE-DONG: (*coming out*) Oh, dear! There's definitely no one around. Name the price of the cow now.

COW DEALER A: (*drags the cow out to the front yard*) She's so much older than I expected and so skinny, too. (*After looking at the cow again, COW DEALER A indicates the price with his fingers*) This is my best price for her.

GAE-DONG: Is that all? No, come on, you can do better than that!

COW DEALER A: No. I'm naïve to even consider buying her. No cow dealer except me will be interested in her.

GAE-DONG: But your price is next to nothing.

COW DEALER A: Wait a moment. My offer is pretty well unbeatable. You said the price is too low but I should take my share.

GAE-DONG: Look, somebody will be coming any minute. All right, I have no choice. All I want to do is just get my travel costs to Manchuria.

COW DEALER A: Of course. I'll run to town and get the cash for you. Anyway, will you depart tonight or tomorrow morning?

GAE-DONG: The sooner the better. As soon as I get the money, I'll go. If I get into Manchuria, there'll be plenty of money coming in. I can easily make enough money to buy ten or twenty cows like this one, most probably.

COW DEALER A: of course. You can say that again. I heard that money is like water in Manchuria. You'll get a bigger and better cow to tie up here. That'll be no problem. (*Tries to drag the cow out*)

GAE-DONG: No, just a minute! It's better to keep the cow here for a while. I'll bring her to your place tonight when I leave my house. If somebody in my family finds out this cow is missing, the whole thing will be messed up.

COW DEALER A: . . . Wait a minute. Let me think this over. I'm afraid of what might happen if we're found out, even after I pay you the money . . .

GAE-DONG: Oh, you fool, stop worrying. That's not something we'll have to go through. If you keep the secret and I never tell it either, who can find out about it? Who the hell knows this story? Am I right? Do you agree? So, don't worry.

At this moment, MAL-DONG comes back from the field. He's carrying an A-framed carrier on his back. He pretends not to see GAE-DONG and COW DEALER A.

MAL-DONG: (*on the road*) Gae-Dong, what are you doing there?

Who's that you are with?
MAL-DONG: Nothing's going on. I'm just feeding the cow.

GOOK-SEO and THE LANDOWNER'S AGENT's voices are approaching from the back yard. GAE-DONG and COW DEALER A slowly draw back. MAL-DONG examines the cow, sensing that something odd is going on. Seeing nothing wrong with the cow, MAL-DONG feels relieved. By the barn, THE LANDOWNER'S AGENT appears with GOOK-SEO and the WIFE.

THE LANDOWNER'S AGENT: . . . Well, then, deliver the rice sacks to the landowner's barn in the New Road before dark.

GOOK-SEO: Yes, sir.

THE LANDOWNER'S AGENT: And before I go, let me remind you once more! Two sacks six stone for last year, three sacks two stone for the year before. Five sacks and six stone short all together. You still have to pay four sacks and seven stone after deducting the amount that you paid now. Keep that in mind.

MAL-DONG: (*hearing THE LANDOWNER'S AGENT beside him and speaking rudely*) So, what about it?

THE LANDOWNER'S AGENT: You must settle my account soon. How dare you cut in like you do, you ill-bred young lad! How can you meddle in your elder's affairs? Gook-SEO, listen to me carefully. You know, I told you several times about a new law, which comes into force in the spring. A New Land Act will be introduced from next year. When it becomes law, a tenant farmer will have better conditions than now. But you must pay all year long-standing debts. If you don't, it's a problem for both you and me. It'll be too complicated to solve the matter even in the court.

GOOK-SEO: I know. That's what I've been telling you all day today. As you probably know, we've nothing to . . .

THE LANDOWNER'S AGENT: It's useless to say that at this stage. I just do what the landowner says. If you don't pay all of it this time, there'll be several unpleasant consequences for you! Because my final move against you will be made without mercy! Keep that in mind.

MAL-DONG: You take everything that we've worked our fingers to the bones to get. And how can you talk like this? You say this is a fruitful year, but search my house, you won't find a grain of rice!

GOOK-SEO: . . . Stop it, Mal-Dong.

THE LANDOWNER'S AGENT: Look at this wicked boy. What are you pointing your finger at me for? Damn it! (*Hitting MAL-DONG with a stick*)

MAL-DONG: (*shouting*) Father, let me go! What are the New Land Acts? You want to make trouble for us. Make your final move, whatever it is! You can't make things any worse for us than they are now.

GOOK-SEO: (*tries to calm MAL-DONG down and pulls him out*) Go out! Be gentle!

THE LANDOWNER'S AGENT: I can't stand it! See what happens. I'll pull the pillars out from your house, and take the kettle from your kitchen. Ha! Do you think I can't drag that cow off?

GOOK-SEO: You mean my cow? Please, don't. That cow is a special one. She is a cousin of the cow who won the first prize in the Best Cow Contest and . . .

THE LANDOWNER'S AGENT: So what? What does the first prize mean? In the Best Cow Contest?

WIFE: . . . Please, have pity on us. Don't pay any attention to what that foolish boy said. He's just a senseless child. Please . . .

THE LANDOWNER'S AGENT: Leave me alone! Don't you dare touch me! I'm angry as hell!

THE LANDOWNER'S AGENT *pushes away the WIFE and goes out angrily.*

GOOK-SEO: (*to MAL-DONG*) You idiot, get out of my sight!

MAL-DONG: (*draws away from GOOK-SEO slowly*) I haven't done anything wrong. You just blame everything on me for nothing.

WIFE: What shall I do? We really are in great trouble now, making the landowner's agent so upset. There's no doubt that he'll take the land we rent away.

GOOK-SEO: That foolish boy has added one more problem to my list of troubles.

YOUNG-SIL, a neighbour farmer, looks in from the road, then enters the front yard.

YOUNG-SIL: Ha ha ha, if Moon-Jin were here right now, he would say 'the spring wind is everywhere.' Gook-Seo, don't fret. I watched the fight between you and the landowner's agent, but this kind of fight is very common and a part of daily life in this town. Just take things as they are, all right? I've just come from

town and Gook-Jin wants you to come down there right now.

GOOK-SEO: Me?

YOUNG-SIL: Maybe he needs to discuss that money-borrowing matter with you. I should go now, I'll be seeing you. (*Exits*)

GOOK-SEO: Has he met another problem? What's happened? (*Enters the room*)

WIFE: Will you go to town now? (*Speaks toward the room*) Buy some sort of present for the landowner's agent, please. I'll send it to him. I'm really worried about him getting angry. We should smooth things out with him. Then I can feel more comfortable.

The WIFE stands alone. Pause. The singing voice of YOO-JA is heard. YOO-JA enters from the right hand side.

YOO-JA: . . . Madam, where is Gae-Dong?

WIFE: Why do you follow Gae-Dong day and night? Do you want to destroy him?

YOO-JA: (*smiles feebly*) Let me see. This is a powder case. Smell this. Good? (*Laughs*) Can you smell the high-society? I'll give it to Gae-Dong. This powder is very expensive. When I was in Seoul, my Mr. Najimi presented it to me. A man in high-society . . .

WIFE: Go out quickly! Gook-Seo will come out. He's in his room now.

GOOK-SEO: (*comes out wearing his suit. Soon after seeing YOO-JA, GOOK-SEO rushes to YOO-JA and shouts to her as if he is shooing chickens away*) Whoo! Whoo! Whoo!

YOO-JA: (*laughs*) What are you doing? I'm not a chicken. (*Getting kicked by GOOK-SEO*)

GOOK-SEO: (*puts on shoes*) What a pity! Anyway, I can't accept all this. Why did you allow that mad girl to stay around my house?

WIFE: I kicked her out but she keeps coming back again and again.

GOOK-SEO: I'll go to town now. I'll be seeing you.

WIFE: Finish the money borrowing matter quickly, please. Tomorrow is the deadline for Dol-Yi's debts.

GOOK-SEO: Don't worry. It'll not be a serious problem. I suppose they need the borrower to agree to sign the contract in person. That's why Gook-Jin contacted me.

WIFE: If you borrow the money, please come home at once. Mal-Dong is so delighted that he can get married.

GOOK-SEO: I'll arrange my business. While I'm in town, tell Mal-Dong to take the ticks off the cow. (*Exits*)

WIFE: (*calling out*) Mal-Dong! (*MAL-DONG comes out from the*

backyard) Will you pick the ticks from the cow? Your father asked you to do it.

MAL-DONG: Father blames everything on me. The landowner's agent was wrong. Mother, you think in a reasonable way.

WIFE: You fool! Don't you know you can't judge everything in terms of reason? You have to think in terms of money and mutual give and take.

MAL-DONG: You're wrong. This is not justice. Anyway, mother . . . *(Pulling ticks from the cow)* . . . what do you think of Gui-Chan? Don't you think she's all right? Don't you think I picked out a nice girl? Mother?

WIFE: She's a nice girl, unbeatable!

MAL-DONG: Yes, she's unbeatable! She's the best girl in this village. Mother, after I get married to her, we'll work very, very hard at farming. Then mother, you can just lay yourself down and enjoy the sunshine on the warm floor. You can take a nap when you're tired, and when you get bored, you can spin thread or knit hemp, just to pass the time of day. You'll be able to leave everything to us and stop worrying about farming. There won't be any work that we can't manage. From today, you won't have to work so hard at ploughing in the cornfield under the hot sun or quarrelling with people over the irrigation of the rice paddies. Gui-Chan and I will do everything.

WIFE: You just wait until the week after your wedding day before telling me all that dreamy stuff. People say that a man loses interest in a woman after he's slept with her just one night, even if she's Aphrodite. That's the nature of men.

MAL-DONG: Don't be silly. You've just heard the talk of playboys in town.

WIFE: Then you're trying to tell me you're not that kind? Yes, that's true. But be on your guard. Do you know who the most important figure in your marriage is?

MAL-DONG: It's me, of course. Is there somebody to get the bride? You must be joking, mother. Who else in this house could be the groom?

WIFE: You're right. But Gui-Chan's hand is being given to you because of our cow, not because her family sees anything in you!

MAL-DONG: Our cow?

WIFE: That's the truth, son. So you'd better thank the cow for letting you have a girl like Gui-Chan. You should bow to the cow until your nose touches the ground. *(Tries to force MAL-DONG to make a bow)*

MAL-DONG: Stop it, mother. I'll be embarrassed if anyone sees me. If Gui-Chan come and see . . . *(Giggles)*

MAL-DONG *resists bowing to the cow but is very happy. At last the WIFE gets him to bow. At this moment GUI-CHAN enters.*

GUI-CHAN: Hello, Ma'am. Has my father been here?

MAL-DONG: *(jumping up suddenly)* Oh, no!

WIFE: *(laughs)* Gui-Chan saw Mal-Dong bowing, after all.

GUI-CHAN: *(blushing)* Why did you make him do that? Bowing to a cow . . .

MAL-DONG: *(feeling both delight and embarrassment, to the WIFE)* I told you, mother! *(To GUI-CHAN)* Did you really see me bowing like that?

GUI-CHAN: *(nodding her head)* Mm.

MAL-DONG: You, rascal!

GUI-CHAN: Ouch! Why did you pinch me? *(GUI-CHAN hits MAL-DONG)*

WIFE: Why are you looking for your father, Gui-Chan?

GUI-CHAN: Mother is asking for him. The landowner is coming to my house for old debts.

WIFE: Oh, no. He really wants to confiscate your land. Oh, dear, what can I do? Did Dol-Yi pay the debts with the loan he got for you?

GUI-CHAN: Yes, but there's still something left to pay.

MAL-DONG: I'll find Dol-Yi now. Let's go Gui-Chan, be quick!

MAL-DONG *lashes GUI-CHAN's legs with a whip playfully.*

GUI-CHAN: Ah!

GUI-CHAN and MAL-DONG *run out together. The WIFE smiles.*

WIFE: Oh, goodness. He's really up in the clouds! He simply melts when he's around that girl. *(Laughs)*

GAE-DONG *enters hurriedly, looking a little bit excited.*

GAE-DONG: Mother, would you pack some of my clothes for me? My coat, too.

WIFE: What are you up to all of a sudden?

GAE-DONG: I have some business in town now.

WIFE: What's that?

GAE-DONG: I should go to the Town Hall by four. Give me my clothes, hurry! Go to the room! (*Pushing the WIFE into the room*)

WIFE: What takes you to the Town Hall?

GAE-DONG: I'll tell you the whole story later. Hurry, pack the clothes! I'll go to the neighbour now. I'll be back in a minute.

While GAE-DONG exits, YOO-JA appears on the stage. YOO-JA follows GAE-DONG with short, quick steps.

YOO-JA: Yes, I've found you, at last. Gae-Dong, I've brought it for you. Take this face powder box. Here.

When YOO-JA exits hurriedly to GAE-DONG, MAL-DONG's singing and GUI-CHAN's laughter are heard in the distance. YOO-JA stares in that direction and stands still for a moment. MAL-DONG and GUI-CHAN appear from the road.

YOO-JA: (*stares at the couple and suddenly exclaims*) Gae-Dong? Where are you? He was here just now.

YOO-JA *rushes out following GAE-DONG.*

MAL-DONG *says good bye to GUI-CHAN and returns home singing with joy.*

MAL-DONG: The strawberries tumbling about in the straw patch.

The chestnuts rolling under the chestnut tree.

Eh-heh-ya pum-a-ya

Gather up the strawberries,

Eh-heh-ya pum-a-ya

Chestnuts fill the basket.

Mother! (*shouts in the front yard*) Nobody is in the house. (*Stands beside the cow*) Thank you. Who knows you saved my life? Have as much fodder as you want. (*Gives fodder to the cow*)

The WIFE comes out from the room and watches what MAL-DONG is doing for a while. She enters the room with a smile. MAL-DONG goes out to the backyard with a hoe and a dust basket and keeps singing joyfully.

Pause.

GOOK-SEO and GOOK-JIN enter.

GOOK-SEO: They can't borrow money, even a penny.

GOOK-JIN: They said we have to raise money on the house or other property. If not, it's impossible for us to borrow money.

GOOK-SEO: Damn it! My neighbour Mr. Kim used to lend money to me without asking difficult questions. My face is the credit.

GOOK-JIN: That's another story. You can do that when you borrow just ten or twenty nyang. But if you want to borrow a large amount, just signing the form is not enough.

WIFE: (*comes out from the room*) Oh, you're back already?

GOOK-SEO: I met Gook-Jin on the way. He said he can't borrow the money we wanted.

WIFE: Oh, no! What can we do if we can't borrow the money? Mr. Nakamura will come here to take Gui-Chan the day after tomorrow.

GOOK-SEO: What can we use as security? I can't get an unsecured loan. Damn it! If it's that urgent, sell your second-hand underwear to make money. Then pay the money for Gui-Chan. You can have your favourite daughter-in-law. I can do nothing. How can I borrow money without security? There's nothing I can do. If you want to cut off my hair to solve the matter, go ahead. I don't mind.

GOOK-JIN: You go too far, brother.

GOOK-SEO: Then, what can I do? I'm so poor at speaking.

MAL-DONG enters from work, still singing joyfully.

GOOK-SEO: (*to MAL-DONG*) You, idiot! You deserve to get lashed! What makes you so happy that you're singing? You're a good-for-nothing! You cannot do anything but sing! Get out of my sight! Go and catch the cow's ticks.

MAL-DONG becomes upset so he goes under the persimmon tree and sits there.

GOOK-JIN: Without saying this or that, brother, how about selling your cow?

GOOK-SEO: Are you crazy? The cousin of my cow . . .

GOOK-JIN: . . . Won the first prize in the Best Cow Contest. If so, selling the cow is the best idea at the moment. If somebody lends us the money as we wish, then let us think about what will happen afterwards. How can you pay the high interest? The interest will become as much as the amount you borrowed, and

it'll be twice or three times more than that soon. So we could face a financial crisis. In the end, we will have to sell the cow. So it'll be all the same if we sell the cow now or later on.

GOOK-SEO: I can't! 'A cow is the life of a farmer's house' as the proverb says. No farmer has ever become better after selling his cow either in the past or now.

GOOK-JIN: But a cow is less valuable than your son, isn't it?

GOOK-SEO: You can't say that. A cow is rated as a more valuable thing than my sons among the neighbours. People could neglect dozen of sons but it's not possible to neglect a cow if you own one.

WIFE: He's right. Our neighbour says we're a rich family because of the cow. And Dol-Yi sends Gui-Chan to us because he can count on our cow.

GOOK-SEO: Probably. Even at the inn I get credit for the same reason. They say, 'Gook-Seo, you may drink as much as you want. We'll give you credit. You've a cow.' Do you still think they count on my sons?

GOOK-JIN: Having a cow is better than nothing. But brother, there's no other solution at this time. And Dol-Yi already promised he would send Gui-Chan to Mal-Dong. He is taking the risk himself of becoming a beggar. If he fails to pay his debts, the landowner will take back his land. So we must keep the . . .

GOOK-SEO: Listen, now, in this country, nobody will dedicate his or her body for somebody else. It's true, Dol-Yi promised me what you said. But he has another reason. He already got and spent half of the money for Gui-Chan. He knows we're trying to pay back that amount. So he'll not lose his money in any case. That's why he made a decision like that.

GOOK-JIN: Let me see, brother, if you think so much of your cow, the landowner will definitely not leave her alone. He'll try his best to recover the old debts this year. I heard a new Act will be introduced from next year. This is a good excuse for him. So he'll probably take your cow off soon. He's a clever man so he'll not miss this chance. Be realistic, brother.

WIFE: The landowner's agent was upset a moment ago, because of these old debts . . .

GOOK-JIN: Listen to that, brother. We've done it, we've made that harsh tough person upset. Brother, it's time to make a difficult decision. Will you do it?

GOOK-SEO: You're right to a certain extent. I'm also worried about my old debts . . .

GOOK-JIN: And you can still farm without your own cow. If you need a cow for next season, you can rent one at a reasonable price. Don't worry about next year's farming.

WIFE: Yes. We'll lose a cow but we'll have one more worker. Actually there's no harm in farming. Gui-Chan is just a girl but she gets on with the farming so nicely. She's also good at keeping house.

GOOK-SEO: If I sell my cow, can I make the deal soon? I mean in a day.

GOOK-JIN: I've already been to Soon-Dol's shop in town. He said that he would take the cow if we wanted to sell.

GOOK-SEO: Did he?

GOOK-JIN: Yes. He'll come here anyway. He has other business in this town. So I asked him to visit us.

WIFE: . . . Oh, there's somebody coming with a cow.

GOOK-JIN: It's Soon-Dol. He already bought a cow.

GOOK-SEO: If we have to sell the cow, please do it when I'm not here. I can't watch my cow going to somebody else. It's the pain of parting!

GOOK-SEO goes to the room walking on all fours. COW DEALER B, around thirty-five years old, enters into the house with a cow. He wears traditional clothes.

GOOK-JIN: Soon-Dol, have you already bought a cow?

COW DEALER B: Yes. But I want to buy one more, if possible.

GOOK-JIN: Then, buy this cow. My brother's just agreed.

COW DEALER B: Just a moment. This is the only cow he owns, right?

GOOK-JIN: That's right. Do you know any tenant farmer who can afford to feed two cows? Offer your price for this one, please.

COW DEALER B: It's really odd. You haven't sold this cow to anyone, have you?

GOOK-SEO: (*coming out from the room furiously*) Of course not. Do you think of me as some kind of a swindler? I'm not a thief. This cow is a cousin of Mr. Kim's cow, who won the first prize in the Best Cow Contest. Be sensible!

WIFE: What nonsense. How can we sell a cow twice? It's simply impossible!

COW DEALER B: Don't get angry with me. I heard someone say this cow is sold. So I just wanted to be sure. That's all.

All the PEOPLE look at each other in embarrassment.

THREE PLAYS BY CHI-JIN YOO

GOOK-SEO: . . . What do you mean?
 WIFE: It's ridiculous! Who could sell our cow without the permission of my husband?
 GOOK-JIN: Soon-Dol, I'm sure you're misinformed. We don't own two cows in our house. And nobody owns a share in this cow. We haven't sold this cow and who else could sell it?
 GOOK-SEO: Certainly not! Thunderbolts will strike!
 WIFE: Wait a minute. Maybe we don't know. The landowner might have sold it without telling us. The landowner's agent did leave here in a rage.
 GOOK-SEO: That's right. Because of the fuss we made about the rent. My old debts, I mean.
 GOOK-JIN: (to COW DEALER B) Soon-Dol, tell us what you heard. Who did you hear that story from?
 COW DEALER B: I don't know the details, I just know the person who bought the cow.
 GOOK-JIN: Who is he? Who? Please name the cow dealer who bought this cow.
 COW DEALER B: Maybe The Hammer, yes that is his nickname. He used to do business with me. Anyhow, the person who told me about it didn't know all the details either.
 GOOK-SEO: I'm at my wit's end. I don't know anything.
 WIFE: What a shock!
 GOOK-JIN: I think I know. This is a trick the landowner's playing. Otherwise, I can't think of anyone who would dare touch this cow.
 GOOK-SEO: (raging at MAL-DONG) You idiot! Get out of my sight right now! You're to blame for this! Why did you talk so rudely to the landowner's agent?
 WIFE: You always make a mess of things, whatever you do. Now, what are we going to do?
 MAL-DONG: Mother, listen to me. I know the dealer who bought our cow. Tell me, what he looks like? I mean the one they call 'The Hammer.'
 COW DEALER B: Well, he's got a short hair cut and he's a little bit fat . . .
 MAL-DONG: A short hair cut and a little bit fat . . . Yes, that's him! I'm going to break his neck.
 GOOK-JIN: Do you know him?
 MAL-DONG: I know the whole story now. A while ago, Gae-Dong brought a young fat man to the house. They were dragging off the cow and talking in whispers under the persimmon tree. He

THE COW

was looking carefully at the cow. And when they saw me, they ran away!
 COW DEALER B: That's him! Maybe that was the story. There's no smoke without a fire. (Exits)
 GOOK-SEO: The devil will take him!
 WIFE: Don't you dare say such an evil thing unless you saw him clearly with your own eyes! Why are you trying to prove Gae-Dong's a swindler?
 GOOK-SEO: No, it might be Gae-Dong. He was almost crazy wanting to sell the cow to get his travel costs to Manchuria.
 GOOK-JIN: That's true. And he's so shrewd.
 GOOK-SEO: Tell me, what can I do with that villain? He deceived me and . . .
 MAL-DONG: Leave it to me, father. I'll get him at once and kill him. This cow is mine! For my wedding! Damn boy! (Rushing out after GAE-DONG with a sickle in his hand)
 WIFE: Don't do that, boy! That foolish boy has a sickle! Stop him! Please stop him!
 GOOK-SEO: Mal-Dong! Calm down!
 WIFE: I'm sure Gae-Dong isn't the one who sold the cow. A little while ago, he said to me, 'Mother, pack some of my clothes. I'm going to the Town Hall.' It's true. The bundle is still in the room. That's it! He has business in the Town Hall.
 GOOK-JIN: Why did he go to the Town Hall?
 GOOK-SEO: (throws away the bundle) Really, how foolish you are. Did you pack up the clothes? Don't you know that sneaky boy's tricks? He wants to go to Manchuria and you're being cheated. Tell me the truth! Did you coax him to sell the cow and run away to Manchuria?
 WIFE: Good gracious! Why should I do such a sinful thing? He said he had business at the Town Hall so I packed the clothes because he asked me to.
 GOOK-JIN: Stop it, brother. The situation is bad enough, already. We just gave away a cow worth at least three thousand nyang for next to nothing. Oh, I'll go mad just thinking about it!
 WIFE: Here comes Gae-Dong! Now you can ask him whether I lied to you or not.

GAE-DONG runs in breathlessly. When GAE-DONG sees everyone looking very serious, he shrinks back.

GOOK-SEO: (runs over to GAE-DONG) You vicious boy! Come on!

THREE PLAYS BY CHI-JIN YOO

Where's the money you got from selling the cow? Give it to me!
 GAE-DONG: What? What do you mean? What cow?
 GOOK-SEO: Why do you deny it?
 GAE-DONG: I didn't sell the cow.
 GOOK-SEO: Don't you play innocent! Take out the money now! Be quick!
 GOOK-JIN: Don't do that boy and give the money back.
 GAE-DONG: I don't have any money. Who sold the cow? I didn't.
 GOOK-SEO: (*grabs GAE-DONG's neck*) Damn you! You can't deceive me! I've got a witness who says he saw you selling the cow and I know the person who bought the cow. Are you still going to try to deceive me? Damn it! Give me the money you got from selling the cow!
 GAE-DONG: Leave me alone! I swear I didn't do it! (*Tears himself away from GOOK-SEO*)
 GOOK-SEO: (*tries to strike GAE-DONG*)
 WIFE: Stop it!

When GAE-DONG tries to get away from GOOK-SEO, MAL-DONG, who still has a sickle, runs up to GAE-DONG and tries to block GAE-DONG's way. GAE-DONG, afraid of MAL-DONG, escapes and runs behind the house. MAL-DONG and GOOK-SEO chase him out.

WIFE: Oh, no! Take that sickle from him! Be quick!
 GOOK-JIN: Mal-Dong! The sickle!

The WIFE and GOOK-JIN follow, shouting. The stage is empty.

GAE-DONG: (*shrieks from behind the house*) Oh, no! Help me! Help!

GAE-DONG enters with a bloodstained face. GOOK-JIN, GOOK-SEO and the WIFE rush in all at once. MAL-DONG follows them feeling scared. He still has the sickle. Neighbours gather in the road to watch. GOOK-SEO turns to GAE-DONG, who is moaning with pain and starts to search him.

GOOK-SEO: You vicious boy, give me the money! Tell me where you hid the money you got from selling the cow?
 GAE-DONG: Ouch that hurt!
 WIFE: (*so flustered that she does not know what to do*) Oh, no, what can I do after all this? He'll die from this injury. (*To MAL-DONG*) Don't you see what you've done to your brother, you

THE COW

clumsy fool! You could have talked things over calmly! What a terrible thing you have done to Gae-Dong. He just wants to sell the cow and go to Manchuria for the sake of all the family. He wants to try to give us a better life.
 GOOK-SEO: (*still busily searching GAE-DONG.*) Where did you hide it? Now take it out! Quickly!
 GOOK-JIN: Look, brother! Let's bandage the wound first! Even if he's sold the cow, the money won't go anywhere. (*GOOK-JIN bandages GAE-DONG's wounded head*)
 WIFE: If we hadn't stopped that Mal-Dong, the poor boy might have been hurt really badly, by that foolish boy . . .
 GOOK-JIN: I've finished bandaging. . . . Well, now Gae-Dong, don't be so stubborn! Tell the truth!
 GAE-DONG: Honestly, uncle, I was going to sell her. So I finished negotiating with a dealer. But the dealer wouldn't buy the cow from me. He said that he was afraid he would get into trouble if he bought the cow without an adult knowing about it. So he said he couldn't buy the cow.
 GOOK-SEO: Don't tell any lies, boy. Then why did you ask your mother to pack your clothes? That's clear proof of your plan to escape to Manchuria with the money you received from the sale of the cow.
 GAE-DONG: No. I do want to go to the Town Hall. A friend of mine gave me some information. He knows that I couldn't sell the cow. An officer in the Town Hall was looking for men who want to work in Manchuria. The dead line was four o'clock this afternoon. So I was rushing to apply for the job. They will arrange the work place and pay the travel costs as well.
 WIFE: Good heavens! Gae-Dong's head was cut for no reason!

The bloodstained sickle drops from MAL-DONG's hand.

GOOK-SEO: Then where on earth did that story about the cow come from?
 GOOK-JIN: Anyhow, let's lay Gae-Dong on the floor. Our cow is not sold. Probably Soon-Dol was misinformed somewhere.

GOOK-SEO puts GAE-DONG on the floor with GOOK-JIN. THE LANDOWNER'S AGENT comes in with COW DEALER C. Like COW DEALER A, who has a short hair cut and is a little bit fat.

THE LANDOWNER'S AGENT: What's happened to Gae-Dong? Has he

still not departed for Manchuria? Gook-Seo, I came over here again to solve the problem of the old rent you owe. It is rather hard for me to say something at a moment like this, but listen carefully. The landowner and I got the idea that since you can't pay the rent, there won't be any harm done if we take your cow away with us. What do you think? Don't you think that might be good for both of us. It won't cause any dispute now or in the future.

GOOK-JIN: What?

THE LANDOWNER'S AGENT: Well, Hammer!

Everybody is alarmed when THE LANDOWNER'S AGENT calls 'Hammer'.

THE LANDOWNER'S AGENT: Well, The Hammer will take that cow out!

GOOK-SEO: You're 'The Hammer'! Short hair cut and a little bit fat

GOOK-JIN: How dare you? You've already made an arrangement with this dealer to sell our cow secretly.

THE LANDOWNER'S AGENT: I don't care! When I learned the news that your second son tried to sell the cow and couldn't, I ran here, thinking what a wonderful opportunity it was.

GOOK-SEO: You can't sell my cow without letting me know.

A NEIGHBOUR: Yes. That's unreasonable.

THE LANDOWNER'S AGENT: Pay your old debts first and fair. That's just.

GOOK-JIN: (*pushing COW DEALER C, who is driving the cow away*) Get away! It's outrageous. Push the cow into the barn in any case.

Then calculate the debt and ask the people whoever is right or whoever is wrong. (*GOOK-CHIN drives the cow into the back yard*)

COW DEALER C: (*follows GOOK-JIN*) Damn it!

THE LANDOWNER'S AGENT: (*follows COW DEALER C*) If you insist, I can't guarantee your future, Gook-Jin!

WIFE: How on earth! How can he come in here and take what belongs to us? That cow is our source of life!

All Neighbours exit following the cow. Nobody is on the stage except MAL-DONG, who stands still leaning against the wall and GAE-DONG, who lies in pain on the floor.

GAE-DONG: (*moans*) Mother, give me some water . . . mother . . . water . . .

ACT THREE

Two weeks later.

The stage setting is the same as in the previous act. GAE-DONG is sitting in the corner of the barn with his head bandaged. He seems very bitter. The WIFE is making a fire to heat the room. YOUNG-SIL, MOON-JIN, YOUNG WORKER, OLD WORKER and the neighbours are worked up over the cow incident. It is a chilly autumn evening. Stars are shining in the clear sky. The persimmon tree stands bare. Stacks of straw are in one corner of the stage.

MOON-JIN: (*laughs*) Then what finally happened to the cow?

WIFE: Was there any choice for us? The landowner's agent brought a cow dealer and took her away from us.

YOUNG WORKER: And?

WIFE: That's all.

MOON-JIN: Oh, spring winds are everywhere.

OLD WORKER: Stop saying that foolish phrase, Moon-Jin. It's not the time to say that.

YOUNG WORKER: For heaven's sake! Why are you keeping silent about it? If I were you, I wouldn't just sit back and do nothing. I'd make a big fuss.

OLD WORKER: You're not talking sense, young man. Your fists are useless in this world. Only money talks. Debts come before everything else.

YOUNG WORKER: I don't think so. We don't live in such a simple world. It's different from old times. Even if somebody has something to pay back, he can't take someone else's property by force. There is no law like this anywhere!

OLD WORKER: Don't mention the law. I believe money is the most important thing. Money comes before the law.

MOON-JIN: Stop it. (*To YOUNG WORKER*) You too. Old men talk sense I presume. He's got more experience than we have. Yes, we should borrow the old man's wisdom. You're just pretending to be a clever man by talking about the law and so on, we know you're not a lawyer. And this is not the court. It would be useless to sit here and discuss the natural law and principles in this place. You'll only lose your energy. The best thing to do for farmers like you and me is just see what happens. Don't mind the world turning to the right or to the left.

OLD WORKER: Thick Beard, what happened? You're so clever suddenly.

THREE PLAYS BY CHI-JIN YOO

YOUNG WORKER: Even the meekest will lose his temper finally. How can I just keep watching?

WIFE: It's beyond the imagination of anyone who has not experienced it. I can't just watch it. After we lost the cow, Gook-Seo and me couldn't get over the feeling of being mistreated. We've considered many things over the last couple of days. Therefore, we sent Gook-Jin to town, to the notary's office or the solicitor's, or some place like that. . . . Anyway, we're going to sue the landowner and The landowner's agent. That'll shake them up!

YOUNG WORKER: You should do that to protect us from this unreasonable action. The landowners are so spoiled! They think nothing of taking a farmer's property! If you sue the landowner, I'll stand for you as a witness.

OLD WORKER: (*laughs*) If you stand for Gook-Seo as a witness, the judge and lawyer will not be afraid of you.

MOON-JIN: (*laughs*) Then I'll go to the court with my lunch. I really want to see you boasting in the witness box. . . . (*Stands up*)

WIFE: Do we have any chance of winning the case in the court?

MOON-JIN: I've no idea. I'm not a judge. (*To YOUNG WORKER*) Ask this clever man. It's better to go home and sleep. (*To GAE-DONG*) You failed to get any help from the cow and you got your head smashed for nothing. Why are you sitting in the dark like that? I've heard that the labourers are being invited to the Town Hall soon. You still have the chance to go to Manchuria. Do you want to apply? Do you?

GAE-DONG: I don't want to listen to you, Thick Beard. It's none of your business.

MOON-JIN: Don't be so sharp with me, boy. If you must sit at all, it's better to come out where it's brighter and look at the clear sky. Do you see that morning star? Somewhere under that star lies Manchuria, where money is floating all around. Ha ha . . .

People laughing all together.

GAE-DONG: Oh, to hell with you Thick Beard. (*Goes out*)

MOON-JIN: Look at that boy! He didn't like it when his stinking bottom was revealed. (*Laughing*) I'll go home and sleep now. Good night, everybody! (*Exits*)

YOUNG WORKER: Is Gae-Dong well again now?

WIFE: Two weeks have passed since he got injured but he's still unwell. Everything became a mess after we lost the cow. Gae-

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Dong cut his head and is upset because he lost his chance to go to Manchuria. Mal-Dong has his own problems, too. Soon after Mr. Nakamura took Gui-Chan to Japan, he stopped eating properly. (*Low voice*) I'll tell you a secret. Mal-Dong planned to set fire to the landowner's agent's house. Good Heavens! He has a one track mind!

OLD WORKER & YOUNG WORKER: Oh, dear!

WIFE: (*tries to imitate MAL-DONG*) 'Damn the landowner's agent, he robbed us of our cow! So my girl will be taken away and sold! I'll set fire to his damned house and burn everything down. Then my rage will be less.' His body was trembling as he said it. I didn't know what I was supposed to do with him. If Gook-Jin hadn't stayed beside him, he would have done it.

OLD WORKER: Only Mal-Dong can imagine that kind of thing!

WIFE: He's so stubborn. Everything that he does is ridiculous. I've lost all my senses. Now there's nothing I can do but laugh.

YOUNG WORKER: Where's Gook-Seo? I haven't seen him recently.

WIFE: He's sick and has stayed all day in his room. He's been so angry since we lost the cow.

OLD WORKER: (*opens the door of GOOK-SEO's room*) Gook-Seo! What are you doing? You shouldn't do that. Don't make yourself sick over such a little thing. Don't stay in the dark. Come out here. The stars are so good tonight.

GOOK-SEO: (*reveals only his face*) Did you have supper? (*To YOUNG WORKER*) Oh, you're here, too. How are you? (*To the WIFE*) Where's the smoke coming from? I'm choking!

OLD WORKER: You became a weakling during the last few days.

WIFE: You said you're feeling chilly. So I lit a fire to warm the room a bit. Is it warm enough now?

GOOK-SEO: Yes. It's good.

OLD WORKER: Well, it seems everything happens to you at once, doesn't it? You lost your cow and got sick on top of that.

WIFE: He loved and fostered the cow as the apple of his eye. He said that losing the cow was more miserable than losing a child. You all saw him the year before last, when we lost our youngest boy. This man didn't shed even one tear. But look at him now . . .

GOOK-SEO: Wait and see what the judgement will be! I'll fight until the last minute! Because we've lived as if we're dumb, or even dead, they think we are some kind of beans for them to eat. However, I'm keeping silent now. I'll do my talking in front of the judge and the district attorney, in court.

YOUNG WORKER: I promise I'll stand for you as a witness.

GOOK-SEO: Yes. All neighbours deserve to support me. You saw the way the landowner's agent drove away my cow so violently, didn't you? As you probably know, that cow is something special. The cousin of . . .

OLD WORKER: . . . That cow won the first prize in the Best Cow Contest.

GOOK-SEO: That's it. The certificate is still hanging in Mr. Kim's house. The landowner's agent dragged out that very cow with the dealer. They got together and did it. The landowner's agent told me that he got two-thousand, two hundred and fifty nyang. Who knows, he might have received three-thousand, two-hundred, and fifty nyang or four-thousand, two-hundred and fifty nyang.

OLD WORKER: Anyway, did you pay off your old debts?

GOOK-SEO: The landowner's agent said I still have to pay one-hundred and ninety nyang after deducting two-thousand, two-hundred and fifty nyang. Who knows the correct account? (*Coughs seriously*)

WIFE: Shut the door and take a rest! You have a cough.

GOOK-SEO: See what happens. I'll report every detail in court and I must crush the landowner's agent. I will! (*To the WIFE*) Did Gook-Jin come back? Is there any message from him?

WIFE: Not yet.

GOOK-SEO: If he comes, everything will be clear. I sent him to the scrivener's office in town with the warrant of mine. You'll have to pay for this. You, damn the landowner's agent! Do you know who I am? I'll fight against you until my death! I haven't felt like living any more since my cow was stolen! (*GOOK-SEO creeps into the room and lies down*)

WIFE: (*shuts the door*)

OLD WORKER: Gook-SEO has an iron nerve. I suppose, the cow is the lifeline of the farm as Gook-SEO said. Look how many people have been hurt since losing that cow! A girl has left the village through force and the shaggy hair bachelor will remain unmarried. The boy with the ambition to go to Manchuria or wherever got his head smashed and the head of the family lies in bed . . . What else is the cow but the source of the farmer's life! It's sale can wreck an entire family. There's nothing more to say.

Neighbour WOO-SAM enters with DOL-YI shoulder to shoulder. Both of them are drunk and WOO-SAM keeps singing.

WOO-SAM: (*keeps singing*) . . . Don't crow you rooster, if you crow, morning will come, morning will come, and I'll be killed. No harm in my death, but who can care for my poor blind father. Oh, my papa . . . (*Imitates sobbing and suddenly bursts into laughter*) Gook-SEO, are you at home? Come out and listen to me. Sim-Cheong in the novel saves her father's life at the cost of her own life. But Gui-Chan has done just as much as Sim-Cheong. Yes, Gui-Chan has dedicated her life for all her family. We must keep this in mind.

DOL-YI: Let me go, Woo-Sam, please. Let me go.

WOO-SAM: Yes, Gui-Chan has dedicated her life for her family. You must know this. She's the best girl in Korea!

YOUNG WORKER: What have you been doing? It's early evening and both of you are totally drunk.

WOO-SAM: I stole Dol-Yi's money. I emptied his purse to the last penny. This means . . . (*To the YOUNG WORKER's ear*) You know, the money from selling Gui-Chan was still in his pocket. Nobody knows but me. I recognised it like a demon. So I emptied his pocket.

WIFE: Do you still have the money? I think you spent it all to pay your long-standing debts for your rent.

WOO-SAM: I tell you. He paid all his debts and just one banknote was left. So I broke that last note. I did! (*Watching OLD WORKER*) Sorry! Forgive my drunken frenzy.

OLD WORKER: You're so greedy, like a gadfly. You're always looking for food and drinks as if there's a demon in you.

WOO-SAM: You should know this. This is the only way to live. . . . I feel dizzy. Who knows I could make a toast thanks to Gui-Chan. (*To the WIFE*) Oh, ma'am, Dol-Yi wants to see you tonight. Yes, the father of the bride would like to say hello to the mother of the groom. This is a formal exchange of nuptial bowing. Bow to ma'am, Dol-Yi.

DOL-YI: What are you doing now? Are you crazy?

OLD WORKER: The marriage arrangement was broken, so what does the formal exchange of nuptial bows mean?

WOO-SAM: No, they should have this. Even though we couldn't control and manage the affair as we wanted, even if we were robbed of the bride, the etiquette is etiquette. These two families are relatives in mind. Understand?

WIFE: (*laughs*) you're right. Anyway, is there any news from Gui-Chan? Has she arrived safely . . .

DOL-YI: Not yet. No letters or messages at all.

THREE PLAYS BY CHI-JIN YOO

WOO-SAM: What? No messages? Speak loudly.

OLD WORKER: It's only to be expected. Japan is too far from here.
You can't expect a quick response.

WIFE: Let me think. She was sold to Japan the day after the fight in my house, so twelve days or thirteen days have passed since . . . If she wanted to, she's had enough time to send a letter.

YOUNG WORKER: A letter may come in a couple of days.

WOO-SAM: Don't worry. She's alive. She's very fortunate. She got the best luck of all the girls in this village! These are good autumn days, the stars in the sky are twinkling, Gui-Chan will be wearing a beautiful dress, and playing cheerfully holding gentlemen on both sides. When she starts to get excited, she may play tunes on the harp. Oh, the farmers like us never dreamed of playing a harp . . . *(Starts dancing)* La la la . . . She will be dancing and singing like me. That's the fantasy land! Don't worry and feel completely free. You made the best decision.

YOUNG WORKER: *(suddenly)* Stop it! Dol-Yi is crying.

DOL-YI: I'm a bastard . . . What else could I be? I sold my daughter . . . I'm a bastard . . . *(Sobbing)*

WOO-SAM: You, you're just a good-for-nothing.

WIFE: He's so drunk. Stop telling jokes and take him home.

OLD WORKER: *(laughs)* The truth comes out when you're drunk. It was his own decision to sell his daughter but he feels bad. He's tendered hearted really.

WIFE: He's such a nice man.

WOO-SAM: No. Whenever he's drunk, he's crying. Stop crying, my friend! Stop crying and wait to see if my words will come true or not. Gui-Chan will make a fortune and you can pack more than a thousand sacks of rice from here to the end of the New Road. If you feel like crying, wait until then. Crying with joy is more valuable than crying in sorrow. You know nothing about the zest of living. Crying is not the best action at this time. You good-for-nothing! Stop crying and go to your wife! *(WOO-SAM exits helping DOL-YI to walk)*

OLD WORKER: *(watching WOO-SAM and DOL-YI's backs and to the YOUNG WORKER)* It's time to go. *(Speaks to the inside)* Gook-Seo, take care.

OLD WORKER: *(to the WIFE)* We'll go now.

WIFE: Good night. *(OLD WORKER and YOUNG WORKER exit together)*

The WIFE looks after the fire and sweeps the front yard with a broom. The singing voice of YOO-JA is heard in the distance. YOO-JA

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appears on the road. She peeps into the house. GOOK-JIN enters from the stage right. The WIFE rushes to GOOK-JIN.

WIFE: Come on! How's the trial?

GOOK-JIN: *(looks at the wall)* Who is she?

YOO-JA: ha ha . . . *(Disappears)*

WIFE: The mad girl. What a surprise! We're in for it. That girl is still following Gae-Dong.

GOOK-JIN: Where's brother? In the room?

GOOK-SEO: *(opens the door and comes out)* Gook-Jin, how's it going? What's the date for the trial?

GOOK-JIN: I didn't sue. I thought about it over and over again. Even if we had sued, it seems there would have been no advantage for us.

GOOK-SEO: What are you talking about?

GOOK-JIN: I went to the notary's office and explained our case fully, from the beginning to the end. The notary explained to me the advantages and disadvantages of suing, then I understood everything clearly. It means, if we sue we can get our cow back immediately as we wish.

GOOK-SEO: Of course. We can get our cow back right away, can't we? Go ahead.

GOOK-JIN: However, he said things could get complicated afterwards. The landowner won't sit back and take the loss without a fight. To begin with, he can claim our house, furniture, and even the rice fields for our old debts. Then we would be beggars and have no way to live. We'd become slash-and-burn farmers. Besides, it costs too much to get the cow back. You pay for the notary's service, of course, then transportation for going to town and returning, and then you have to consider some sort of payment to the neighbours who are witnesses for you in court. This has to be at least a glass of wine. I've counted all the costs for the trial. It seems when you decide to sue, it costs more than the price of a cow.

WIFE: We may go for wool and come home shorn.

GOOK-JIN: Exactly. At first, without having any idea what could happen after the trial, I wanted to sue. Then, when I learned all this, I lost my strength. And that's not all. If we sue the landowner, he'll take back the rent we owe him from next year. Then how can we make a living?

(GAE-DONG appears at the entrance to the barn. The people in the room do not recognise him)

THREE PLAYS BY CHI-JIN YOO

GOOK-SEO: But you know, the cousin of my cow won the first prize in the Best Cow Contest, don't you? That special cow has been taken away! I'm absolutely fuming! And all my neighbours promised to support my case. They're willing to be witnesses at the trial.

GOOK-JIN: Brother, you'll make a big mistake if you do what your conscience tells you to do.

GOOK-SEO: So, what have you decided? What were you doing in town?

GOOK-JIN: I had no choice, but to go to the landowner and make a compromise with him.

GOOK-SEO: Compromise?

GOOK-JIN: That is, we won't make any more fuss about our cow, which he has sold, and in return, he will cancel the rent we owe him.

GOOK-SEO: You mean you cancelled the cow with the debts?

GOOK-JIN: Yes, and in return, he'll let us keep working on the rice fields as before.

WIFE: Did you talk it all over with the landowner?

GOOK-JIN: Yes, I did. And the landowner clearly said 'yes.' I've already made a contract with him. Here is his signature.

GOOK-SEO: (*reading the document*) Damn it! That special cow has been taken away! Good Heavens! Now I've got a paper not a cow! My cow has gone completely!

WIFE: But we paid all our debts. It's all the same. And what a stroke of luck! We can keep the land. A farmer should have land to farm, even if it is as small as the palm of one hand.

GOOK-SEO: (*crying*) Ah! I can't stand it! What will happen to our fine cow, then? Oh, my! The best one in this village! She had such a fine colour and broad chest, and a wonderful ringing sound in her cry! Oh, my God, we're destroyed. No farmer's situation gets better after losing his cow. . . (*Sobbing and going into his room*)

WIFE: Be nice to Gook-Jin. He did his best. He spent all day in town. . . Don't cry.

Some neighbours rush into the house.

YOUNG NEIGHBOUR: (*breathlessly*) Madam! Madam! You're in trouble! It's something serious!

GOOK-SEO: What is it?

YOUNG NEIGHBOUR: (*points to the right*) Look! Fire! A fire has, broken out!

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GOOK-SEO: (*coming out from the room*) What do you mean? What fire?

YOUNG NEIGHBOUR: Do you know the landowner's barn by the Stone Bridge on the New Road? It caught fire. Mal-Dong set it on fire!

GOOK-SEO: Did he?

WIFE: Oh, damn him! That foolish boy has done it at last. Oh, no. What can I do?

YOUNG NEIGHBOUR: Come with me, be quick!

GOOK-JIN: Where's Mal-Dong? Where is he?

YOUNG NEIGHBOUR: He was caught by a policeman. After he started the fire, he just stood as still as a statue, not thinking of escaping. Then he was caught. (*NEIGHBOURS exit with GOOK-JIN*)

WIFE: (*at her wit's end*) Oh, that half-wit! Well done! He really has gone mad because he couldn't get married. He must be out of his mind. Yes, he's gone mad. . . Mad. . . (*Exits*)

GOOK-SEO: (*crawls into his room again*) Damn it, I don't care!

Stage is empty. The sky is getting red. The sound of fire engines is heard from afar. GAE-DONG watches the red sky alone.

GAE-DONG: (*laughs*) What a fire! Soon after I recover from this injury, I must go to Manchuria even on foot. I'll go to the new world. . . I can't live here any more. I'll leave here as soon as possible. . .

YOO-JA *enters and keeps singing.*

YOO-JA: (*half drunk*) Ha ha ha. . . Gae-Dong! Now you're alone. I'll go to Manchuria, too. . . with you. Go there with me, people won't throw stones at me. (*Tries to hug GAE-DONG but GAE-DONG shakes her off. YOO-JA falls to the ground and stands up again and laughing*) I'll go with you. . . Bring me to paradise. . .

GAE-DONG: Go away!

YOO-JA: Ha ha. . .

CURTAIN

The Mud Hut

In Two Acts
(1932)

CHARACTERS

MYEONG-SEO CHOI: A poor old man who is sick
MRS. CHOI
GUM-NYEO: Their daughter
GYEONG-SEON GANG: Nicknamed 'the sniffer'
MRS. GANG
SOON-DOL: GYEONG-SEON's son
SAM-JO: A young man from the neighbourhood
THE VILLAGE HEAD MAN
A WOMAN: Neighbour in her sixties
POSTMAN

1925. Autumn.

ACT I

The inside of MYEONG-SEO's house, a mud hut, not far from the main road. It is a very dismal house like a stable. A kitchen is attached to a room. There is no wall between the kitchen and the room. It has a smoke stained ceiling. There is a door at the rear of the room, through the back-room.

There is a door on the left, to the street, and a window on the right-hand side. The house is very dark except for some autumn twilight from the window.

MYEONG-SEO, in his sixties, is writing a letter crouching on the stage to the right. His mind has grown hazy because of a chronic illness. His melancholy mood comes not from his character but from poverty and disease.

Stage left, GUM-NYEO is making a straw-bag in a daze. She looks sick but wise. The curtain opens to the dull metallic sound of a straw-bag machine.

MRS. CHOI: *(voice only)* Shoo! Shoo! Look at those hens! I'm sick and tired of them.

MRS. CHOI: *enters from left. She carries a hoe and bucket. She is still energetic enough to manage fieldwork.*

MRS. CHOI: *(entering)* Those hens are as shrewd as people. They never fear my voice. *(To GUM-NYEO)* You silly girl, can't you shoo hens away? You just stay at home all day.

GUM-NYEO: Oh, ma, I've so many things to do at home. Have you finished weeding the field?

MRS. CHOI: *(sweeps away the dust)* Not yet. I've just done half. *(To MYEONG-SEO)* Are you still doing that? When will you finish? Oh dear, how long does it take to write just one letter?

MYEONG-SEO: . . .

MRS. CHOI: It doesn't help blinking your eyes and looking at the ceiling all the time. Hurry up. Sam-Jo will soon be here. He's on his way to Japan. Gum-Nyeo, Sam-Jo didn't happen to pass when I wasn't at home?

GUM-NYEO: No, not yet.

MRS. CHOI: I heard in the field that Sam-Jo left his home already carrying a bag. *(To MYEONG-SEO)* You must write and tell Myeong-Soo it's time to come back home this year. And ask him to bring some money when he comes back. Have you written yet?

THREE PLAYS BY CHI-JIN YOO

MYEONG-SEO: Don't make a fuss. You're so noisy I can't concentrate.
 MRS. CHOI: We need some money to live on.
 MYEONG-SEO: It's not easy to write a letter.
 MRS. CHOI: Do you know how long you've spent writing just one letter? Today is the third day. It's long enough for a dumb person to learn how to speak.
 GUM-NYEO: Mother, someone's coming. The dog's barking.

SAM-JO enters smiling. He is wearing a ragged suit and is carrying a bag.

SAM-JO: Mrs. Choi!

MRS. CHOI: Oh, Sam-Jo, the suit and cap really suit you. You look different. The dog can't recognise you. Are you going already?

SAM-JO: *(smiles)* Yes. Do you have something to send to Myeong-Soo?

MRS. CHOI: If I had asked the Village Head Man, the letter could have been finished by now. My husband has spent three days just scribbling. I've lost a good chance to send a letter to my son delivered by hand.

SAM-JO: Hasn't he finished yet?

MYEONG-SEO: It's almost finished. . . .

MRS. CHOI: You'd almost finished that letter two days ago.

GUM-NYEO: Tell Sam-Jo the message, mother.

MRS. CHOI: That's the only thing we can do. Please come in.

SAM-JO: I'm in a hurry.

MRS. CHOI: Just sit and talk for a moment. Look at our situation and tell Myeong-Soo everything about our life here. Anyway, you're looking good. You look like a junior officer!

SAM-JO: Well . . . if I go to Japan and learn Japanese Gonnichiwa, gombangwa, the junior officers will surely envy me. *(Everybody laughs)* Oh, there's no doubt about it.

MRS. CHOI: Please don't forget us when you make your fortune.

SAM-JO: We'll talk about that then. *(Laughs)*

MYEONG-SEO: You're such an able man. How can you afford to travel? Money is as scarce as hen's teeth.

SAM-JO: I took out a loan on the house.

MYEONG-SEO: House? That doesn't sound so good.

SAM-JO: If I get there, the chances of earning money are endless.

MYEONG-SEO: I heard that there're so many people flocking to the port of Busan. Many of them sold their houses to go to Japan but didn't know how to get there, so they're all wandering around the

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port. Nothing's easy. Be careful. When you arrive in Japan, please meet my son Myeong-Soo and let me know what he's doing now. There hasn't been a letter from him since a year last December.

SAM-JO: Don't worry. If I get there, I'll definitely meet up with him.

MRS. CHOI: Japan is not near here and it's not easy to come and go. It's hard to get there or send a letter in person.

MYEONG-SEO: It's nearly seven years since he went there. Tell him to leave his casual job right away and come back home.

SAM-JO: What can he do here if he comes back home? Is there any way of making a living?

MRS. CHOI: It's much easier to find casual work or farm work in your hometown. . . .

SAM-JO: Can you find a place for even a day's labour or farm work here?

MRS. CHOI: It's time for him to marry. He's already in his late twenties.

SAM-JO: Marriage is impossible. We couldn't feed a family even if we worked ourselves to death on the farm.

MRS. CHOI: Oh, Myeong-Seo, we almost forgot to mention the most important thing while we've been chatting. Money.

MYEONG-SEO: You're right.

MRS. CHOI: If Myeong-Soo says he can't come home soon, please tell him to send some money first. If we've got some money, we'll have nothing to worry about.

MYEONG-SEO: Sam-Jo, look at my family. Not one of them looks normal. My wife is getting old, Gum-Nyeo is in poor health. And I've been living off them for many years because of my disabling disease. It's more like in a tomb than a house.

SAM-JO: There is a way out of every situation, even this hell. Myeong-Seo, don't worry. *(Stands)*

MYEONG-SEO: All the young men like you leave here like grasshoppers. Who stays in this place? Only old men like me and the disabled. . . . This place is a useless waste bucket now.

MRS. CHOI: Don't be so miserable in front of a young man who's got a long journey ahead of him.

MYEONG-SEO: Go on your way. I can't give you any hope.

SAM-JO: I'll be off.

MRS. CHOI: Please don't forget to give my best regards to Myeong-Soo and let me know his news.

SAM-JO: Don't worry.

SAM-JO goes out. GYEONG-SEON immediately rushes onto the stage. He impatiently tries to find a hiding place. He speaks through his nose.

THREE PLAYS BY CHI-JIN YOO

MRS. CHOI: Sniffer, have you been beaten by your wife again?
 GYEONG-SEON: (*locks the door with a straight face*) Me? No.
 MYEONG-SEO: If not, why lock the door?
 GYEONG-SEON: Well . . . em . . . I'm afraid of the dog. If your dog barks and barks, don't open the door. (*Hides himself behind the straw-bag machine*)
 MRS. GANG: (*voice only from some distance*) Gyeong-Seon! Where are you now! Gyeong-Seon!
 GYEONG-SEON: (*when he hears MRS. GANG's voice, he cringes with fear*)
 MRS. CHOI: Is that a dog barking?
 MRS. GANG: (*knocks on the door*) Mrs. Choi, did you see my husband, my 'horse-pond'?
 GYEONG-SEON: (*entreats MRS. CHOI to say 'No'*)
 MRS. GANG: Why did you lock the door? Please let me in.
 MRS. CHOI: (*plays the innocent*) He's not in here. Why are you looking for your husband?
 MRS. GANG: What a stupid man he is! Where has he gone in all this uproar?
 GYEONG-SEON: (*quietly*) Gum-Nyeo, has she gone?
 GUM-NYEO: (*opens the door*) Maybe she has.
 GYEONG-SEON: (*as he peeps outside carefully and confirms MRS. GANG has gone. His voice suddenly changes and he says daringly*) WHERE ARE YOU? Dearest? (*Without response*) Godness me! Where is she? I'm here now.
 MRS. CHOI: Oh, you've picked up again now your wife has gone.
 MYEONG-SEO: You idiot! You're a typical hen-pecked husband.
 MRS. CHOI: Like a mouse in front of a cat.
 GYEONG-SEON: Definitely not. If I glared at her and shouted just one word, she would always cower and fall on her knees. But how could a gentleman like me do that?
 MYEONG-SEO: (*laughs*)
 MRS. CHOI: Ha-ha. You're a lion here and a mouse abroad.
 GYEONG-SEON: No, It's true.
 MYEONG-SEO: All right.
 GYEONG-SEON: My wife said two well-dressed men are coming.
 MRS. CHOI: What do you mean?
 GYEONG-SEON: Many gentlemen come and visit a gentleman like me.
 MYEONG-SEO: You're talking big again.
 GYEONG-SEON: My wife asked me to meet them in person and begged earnestly for forgiveness one more time. How can I do that? So I told her gently that 'No, I can't. I don't want to lose

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face.' But look at my wife, she has the cheek to answer back. So how can I put up with it? So I grabbed her by the hair and . . . (*Senses someone coming*) Oh, no! She is here again! (*Hides himself again and everybody laughs*)
 MRS. GANG, a fat woman in her early forties, enters the stage.
 MRS. GANG: I've had enough. Please find my husband. (*Looking all around the house*)
 MRS. CHOI: What makes it so urgent?
 MRS. GANG: (*lifts the straw bags and GYEONG-SEON lies there like a dead man*) You. Don't be a fool. Stop these silly games. Hurry up. Time to go home.
 GYEONG-SEON: Why are you always tagging at my heels? I need some time to myself just to breathe.
 MRS. GANG: You're very fortunate having some time to breathe. You always take things easy. Please take care of your family first! We're ruined!
 MRS. CHOI: (*does not understand*) What's the matter?
 GYEONG-SEON: (*to MRS. GANG*) Now they've started the auction, so it's too late. There's no sense in doing anything. I feel sad too.
 MRS. GANG: You're so optimistic and hopeful.
 MYEONG-SEO: Just what's the matter? Please let me know.
 GYEONG-SEON: Well . . . I borrowed some money at a high rate of interest, but somebody has served a repossession order on my house today.
 MRS. CHOI: (*surprised*) Served what?
 MRS. GANG: Oh, dear, it's not someone else's business, you silly man. How can you just sit back and watch? You always said you were a real man.
 MYEONG-SEO: Some time ago he mentioned two well-dressed guests. We thought it was a joke.
 MRS. GANG: He always makes things into a joke. He causes nothing but trouble.
 MYEONG-SEO: Even if they have the right to collect the debt, how can they turn you all out into the street? It's barbaric.
 MRS. CHOI: A creditor never thinks of the debtor's situation. Hurry up, Sniffer.
 MRS. GANG: (*stamping her feet with anger*) Go and say something to them. They've taken away all our belongings! Blankets, pots, even a piece of cloth! Hurry, Hurry up!
 GYEONG-SEON: No, I can't. How can I watch that miserable scene?

THREE PLAYS BY CHI-JIN YOO

This is not the first time and probably not the last.

MRS. GANG: (*clicks her tongue*) I'm at a loss for words. Where's your spirit? You're always on the go drinking and talking rubbish but when you're needed you're useless and just disappear.

GYEONG-SEON: If they want to take everything away, let them. I'm a man. This is nothing to cry about. If I cry over this, I'll turn into a dried fish.

SOON-DOL *enters the stage crying. He is five or six years old.*

SOON-DOL: Mama, come on! They've taken everything away! Those two men have taken away all our things!

MRS. GANG: Oh, dear, hurry up!

GYEONG-SEON: (*cannot keep calm*) Damn it! Go to the devil! Everything has got confused. (*Walks around at his wit's end, and suddenly stands still. Laughs*) . . . The ways of the world have driven me mad. Oh my god, where can I go? Shall I wander all over the world?

MRS. CHOI: He's gone mad.

GYEONG-SEON: What a dreadful world! (*Rushes out*)

SOON-DOL: (*follows GYEONG-SEON crying*)

MRS. GANG: Gyeong-Seon! Gyeong-Seon! Gyeong-Seon! (*Follows GYEONG-SEON and SOON-DOL, her voice becoming more distant and she is crying*)

GUM-NYEO and MRS. CHOI *watch the GANGS from the door.*

GUM-NYEO: Where are they rushing to?

MRS. CHOI: They lost their spirit when they lost all their belongings.

GUM-NYEO: Look at that! They've crossed the river.

MYEONG-SEO: (*angrily*) That's not a spectacle. Come in. (MRS. CHOI and GUM-NYEO *come into the house, pause and he says as if to himself*) . . . Even Sniffer is in a bad way.

Silence.

Everybody goes back home and gets on with what they were doing.

THE VILLAGE HEAD MAN *enters the stage and stops at the step in front of the door. He brings a cutting from a newspaper.*

THE VILLAGE HEAD MAN: (*watches from afar*) The Sniffers are bankrupted at last. I was worried about the outcome when he started drinking all the time.

THE MUD HUT

MRS. CHOI: How are you, sir?

MYEONG-SEO: What's the point in stopping the drink? There is no remedy for poverty.

THE VILLAGE HEAD MAN: A man should pay his debts in time rather than act shamelessly.

MRS. CHOI: You know well enough, we're not shameless. It's just that we cannot help it. . . . What can I do? My debt brought you here, right? I know. Please give me some more time.

MYEONG-SEO: Did you get another final demand?

THE VILLAGE HEAD MAN: Debt is a problem but not the only problem.

MRS. CHOI: What's wrong?

MYEONG-SEO: What do you mean?

THE VILLAGE HEAD MAN: Don't worry. I just want to ask something. . . . Well . . . Have you had any news from Myeong-Soo recently?

MRS. CHOI: You mean my son Myeong-Soo? Is that what you're asking about?

MYEONG-SEO: No letter recently.

THE VILLAGE HEAD MAN: No letters?

MRS. CHOI: I don't know why. But no letters since a year last December.

MYEONG-SEO: What's happened? Have you heard something?

THE VILLAGE HEAD MAN: (*shows the newspaper*) Look at this picture in the paper.

MRS. CHOI: This one?

THE VILLAGE HEAD MAN: No, that one.

MYEONG-SEO: My eyes are bad. Gum-Nyeo, look at this picture.

GUM-NYEO: (*looks at the picture for a moment and grows uneasy*)

THE VILLAGE HEAD MAN: Do you recognise him?

GUM-NYEO: . . .

THE VILLAGE HEAD MAN: It looks like Myeong-Soo; to me this is Myeong-Soo.

MRS. CHOI: Myeong-Soo?

GUM-NYEO: Maybe.

THE VILLAGE HEAD MAN: I looked at this picture casually at first but something struck me later. It looked like Myeong-Soo. So I read this article carefully. Look at it. His name is in the paper.

MYEONG-SOO CHOI.

MRS. CHOI: Name, too?

MYEONG-SEO: Show me.

THE VILLAGE HEAD MAN: Here.

THREE PLAYS BY CHI-JIN YOO

MYEONG-SEO: (*reads the paper*) . . . Well.
 GUM-NYEO: What's the date of this paper?
 THE VILLAGE HEAD MAN: I don't know. I put it in the lavatory as toilet paper. I saw it by chance. (*Finds the date of the paper*) . . . Right.
 MRS. CHOI: What?
 THE VILLAGE HEAD MAN: You said no letter from him since the December before last. This paper is dated around that time.
 MRS. CHOI: That time?
 MYEONG-SEO: What's the article about?
 THE VILLAGE HEAD MAN: It seems strange to me.
 MRS. CHOI: Tell me.
 THE VILLAGE HEAD MAN: To cut a long story short, Myeong-Soo Choi, who is in a construction team . . .
 MRS. CHOI: What's a construction team?
 THE VILLAGE HEAD MAN: Well . . . people who dig up a mountain and blast it with dynamite and . . . In other words, day labourers.
 MYEONG-SEO: So what?
 THE VILLAGE HEAD MAN: So Myeong-Soo Choi, who is a very dangerous man, organised a secret society with his colleagues for a liberation campaign.
 MYEONG-SEO: Limitation campaign?
 MRS. CHOI: What does that mean?
 MYEONG-SEO: I think he lets people know their limit. Am I right?
 THE VILLAGE HEAD MAN: No. Not limitation, liberation. L-I-B-E-R-A-T-I-O-N. You've no idea, either.
 MYEONG-SEO: No.
 THE VILLAGE HEAD MAN: Oh, dear. You are ignorant. What is a liberation campaign? Well. . . What I heard, in a way, yes, It's similar to a fanatical sect.
 MRS. CHOI: Do you mean a false religion?
 THE VILLAGE HEAD MAN: That's it. He did something like that, and got found out in the end. He was arrested by the police, and now he's being held for preliminary questioning.
 MRS. CHOI: Arrested by the police?
 MYEONG-SEO: Is Myeong-Soo still in prison?
 THE VILLAGE HEAD MAN: I think so.
 MYEONG-SEO: (*defiantly*) It's not true. It can't be my son. My son is the last man to organise a worthless religious campaign. Never. There're so many people who have the same name and a similar face.

THE MUD HUT

THE VILLAGE HEAD MAN: If this is not Myeong-Soo, it's all right. But I think . . . it's him.
 MYEONG-SEO: Why did they do it?
 THE VILLAGE HEAD MAN: It's easy to understand when you see men leaving their hometown and wandering in the cities. These worthless fellows are high minded about nothing. Their family barely manages to stay alive on roots and bark, while they never work. They just form a group and run around shouting 'Man should eat to live!' That's one thing that they do. They always wear smart shoes. What for? All of them are farmers' sons. It would be all right if was just a matter of shoes. But they're wearing formal suits, too, that cost more than fifty won each. How can they be useful men?
 MYEONG-SEO: Nobody likes poor clothes and having to starve.
 THE VILLAGE HEAD MAN: You miss the point, Myeong-Seo. Do you know why all of them left their family and went somewhere? They wanted a luxurious life. They didn't want to live with a poor family. That's why they ran away from here. They think it's a refuge. Anyway their parents are so poor. The parents still believe in their sons. What do you think?
 MRS. CHOI: My son is different from yours.
 THE VILLAGE HEAD MAN: You never get old if you're free from care. The farmer's son should be a farmer. If he studies such things, he'll be ruined soon enough. (*Stands up*)
 GUM-NYEO: (*to the VILLAGE HEAD MAN*) If that young man is in prison, what would you expect the sentence to be?
 THE VILLAGE HEAD MAN: I'm not good at law. The counsel for the Crown and judges are the experts. But if we look at similar cases, it could be a life sentence.
 GUM-NYEO: Life sentence?
 THE VILLAGE HEAD MAN: Without a doubt.
 GUM-NYEO: (*suddenly crying*)
 THE VILLAGE HEAD MAN: Calm down. (*Laughs*) I'll be seeing you MYEONG-SEO. I'll leave the newspaper. Read it later.
 MYEONG-SEO: . . .
 MRS. CHOI: (*glares at THE VILLAGE HEAD MAN, crumples the newspaper and throws it to him*) You bastard! Take it away! Take this away! You evil man! Get out!
 THE VILLAGE HEAD MAN: (*gets angry*) How rude you are!
 MRS. CHOI: You . . .
 MYEONG-SEO: (*to MRS. CHOI*) Keep calm!
 MRS. CHOI: (*pretends not to hear, to GUM-NYEO*) You silly girl, stop

THREE PLAYS BY CHI-JIN YOO

it! I'm sick and tired of it all, stop crying! (*Starts crying herself*)
THE VILLAGE HEAD MAN: (*struck dumb*) She's mad.

THE VILLAGE HEAD MAN goes out.
Pause.

There's only the sound of MRS. CHOI and GUM-NYEO weeping.
MYEONG-SEO stares in blank dismay.

MYEONG-SEO: (*pause*) I feel dizzy. Oh, it's like my head is empty.

Gum-Nyeo, come here. Massage my head please.

GUM-NYEO: (*keeps tears from her eyes*) Yes.

MYEONG-SEO: Don't cry.

GUM-NYEO: (*massages MYEONG-SEO's head*)

MYEONG-SEO: It's a nightmare. I don't know anything. Gum-Nyeo,
I feel dizzy. It's like falling over a steep cliff. It's all dark, hopeless

GUM-NYEO: Time to sleep, father. You look so pale.

MYEONG-SEO: . . .

GUM-NYEO: When you get back, please send Myeong-Soo a letter.
Will you? Then it'll be clear whether The Village Head Man's
words are true or not.

MYEONG-SEO: Sam-Jo will send us some news soon. I hope so
anyway. I'll wait till then.

GUM-NYEO: Go to the back room and sleep. You need to take a rest.

GUM-NYEO helps MYEONG-SEO up and goes to the back room.

MRS. CHOI wipes her tears and takes the newspapers which she threw
away to THE VILLAGE HEAD MAN. Weeps quietly.

*The sound of a neighbour's voice from the back stage. A woman calls
her hens. She peeks into the house.*

WOMAN: Have you seen my chick? I've lost one.

GUM-NYEO: (*comes out from the back room*) No. I haven't.

WOMAN: Where has it gone? It's getting dark now. Woo- Woo- (*goes
out to the back stage*)

*Night falls. MRS. CHOI sighs deeply. She sits on the edge of the floor.
There is the sound of MYEONG-SEO moaning at times.*

CURTAIN

ACT II

The following year. Spring. From early evening to night.

MYEONG-SEO's house, more miserable than in the first act. The
straw-bag machine, the CHOI's most important piece of equipment for
making a living, has been sold long ago. There is a straw mat in the
corner of the kitchen. It is MRS. GANG and SOON-DOL's bed. A
washing line hangs from one side of the kitchen wall to the other. A
lot of broken furniture is at the back.

GUM-NYEO and SOON-DOL are sitting in the house when the curtain
opens.

GUM-NYEO is making a straw head-pad in the dim light between
the room and kitchen. She is hanging seven or eight pads on the
washing line. She is teaching a song to SOON-DOL. SOON-DOL sings
along in a low voice.

A little mouse growing up at a little stream
They are little blind mice

GUM-NYEO: (*stops singing*) No, that's wrong. (*Sings it alone*) They
are little blind mice.

SOON-DOL: (*sings again*) They are little blind mice.

GUM-NYEO: Let's try together again.

They sing together.

A group of little mice growing up at a little stream
They are little blind mice
Squeaking one after the other
Looking funny and poor.

SOON-DOL: (*after singing*) Where's ma got to, Gum-Nyeo?

GUM-NYEO: Well . . . Don't worry. Do you want to sing the song
again?

There are indications someone is coming.

SOON-DOL: Ma! (*Goes to the door and disappears*) I thought it was
my ma.

MRS. CHOI: (*comes in from peddling, holding ten straw pads*) It's so
cold. The wind is still strong. It's not thawing yet.

THREE PLAYS BY CHI-JIN YOO

GUM-NYEO: Have you sold many?
 MRS. CHOI: It's worth doing if it's like today. I've sold three pads already. (*Counts coins from the pocket*) . . . Three, four . . . five and six. It's better than straw-bag making, isn't it?
 GUM-NYEO: (*continues making a straw pad*) . . . You'll do better when the cold has gone. Many people need head-pads for drawing water in spring.
 MRS. CHOI: You're right. Once we pass the peak of winter, everything will be fine. Grass will come out in the fields, the sap will rise in the trees. Then there'll be so many edible grasses and fruits in the fields and mountains. We'll manage to live during the spring. Myeong-Soo should send me a letter.
 GUM-NYEO: . . .
 MRS. CHOI: Oh, is there a letter from him today?
 GUM-NYEO: No.
 MRS. CHOI: I haven't heard from Sam-Jo either. Has he completely forgotten us? More than six months have passed since he left.
 GUM-NYEO: (*to SOON-DOL who is going out*) Where are you going?
 SOON-DOL: To find my ma.
 MRS. CHOI: (*takes the newspaper carefully out of her bosom pocket and stares at the paper*) . . . No. Who can believe this? I don't believe it.
 GUM-NYEO: (*stops working and shouts sharply*) You must tear that newspaper in pieces! Throw it away! Do you still believe that evil Village Head Man's words? You're so simple that you believe everything that Village Head Man says. I know the reputation of the Village Head Man. Myeong-Soo's friend said the Village Head Man is a wild-eyed liar.
 MRS. CHOI: (*folds the newspaper and puts it into her bosom pocket carefully*) Stop it. How do you know? Yes, the Village Head Man is senseless. Just imagine him entering my house with this newspaper. Did father have his dinner?
 GUM-NYEO: He's only just stopped moaning and gone to asleep.
 MRS. CHOI: (*looks into the back room*) I'm afraid he won't live long. He's too weak now.
 SOON-DOL: (*enters the stage*) Mrs. Choi, Where's my mother?
 MRS. CHOI: Who knows?
 SOON-DOL: (*in a loud voice*) Ma!
 MRS. CHOI: Shhh! Don't make that noise when there's somebody sleeping.
 SOON-DOL: (*weeping and sniffing*)
 GUM-NYEO: Why is Mrs. Gang so late today? She went out to beg for

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food. She should have come back by now.
 MRS. CHOI: (*gives SOON-DOL a bowl of cold rice*) Take it.
 SOON-DOL: (*eats the meal weeping*)
 MRS. CHOI: Your mother should be more sensible. Look at her! She hasn't been able to do anything since her house was auctioned. She's almost a beggar. She's become lazy and dirty, and has resigned herself to fate. She doesn't care about anything. (*Points out the kitchen where MRS. GANG lives*) Look at that place. Is it a room or a pig-sty?

 MRS. GANG *enters the stage while MRS. CHOI is speaking. She comes in with a baby on her back. She listens to MRS. CHOI quietly but is feeling unwell.*

 MRS. GANG: Don't make me out to be so cheap. Don't you want to rent a kitchen to me free? If you had a fine room for me to rent, then you could talk all high and mighty.
 MRS. CHOI: Why have you become so lazy? Make head-pads like us in the day time. Then you can earn two or three pence per day. You're just lazy, you do nothing but beg for food or sleep all day. You never change the baby's nappie, never fix the wall . . .
 GUM-NYEO: Calm down, mother.
 MRS. GANG: (*the force of her argument is irresistible*) Oh, yes. Can I see the landlady's face once more? Yes, you're rich and noble. Do you really think this den of a mud hut is fit for human life? You're nothing.
 MRS. CHOI: (*angrily*) What are you saying? You're a beggar, that's all you are. How dare you make all this noise now? You can't live without my help. Get out!
 MRS. GANG: Get out? Why not? Would you feel better if I left here for good? At least you have a house. But don't ignore me.
 MRS. CHOI: Don't blame other people, just look at yourself.
 MRS. GANG: Yes. I'm a dog. I'm a shameless soulless dog. I don't care. If I die in the street or somebody hits me in the face . . .
 MRS. CHOI: I think your spirit was auctioned when your house was auctioned.
 MRS. GANG: (*giggling*) That's it. They swept away my soul when they took away my jars, pans, furniture, home . . . They left me my flesh only.
 MRS. CHOI: . . .
 MRS. GANG: (*stamps her feet on the ground*) What is this flesh for!

THREE PLAYS BY CHI-JIN YOO

Take away my body too! Bastards!

SOON-DOL: (*cries in surprise on hearing MRS. GANG's shouts and almost faints while she is speaking*) Oh, Gum-Nyeo.

GUM-NYEO: She's really angry.

MRS. CHOI: She's gone mad.

MRS. GANG: (*interrupts*) Yes, I've become a mad woman. How can I live without going insane? I must find those damn auctioneers and tell them to take away my flesh too.

MRS. CHOI: It's so rowdy here. (*Holds MRS. GANG's hand*) Mrs. Gang!

MRS. GANG: (*suddenly weeps*)

MYEONG-SEO: (*opens the door of the back room*) What a noise! I can't sleep.

MRS. GANG: . . . Mrs. Choi, beat me. Please beat me to death.

MRS. CHOI: Dry your eyes. Pull yourself together. You're still young.

MRS. GANG: . . . Please beat me to death.

GUM-NYEO: Don't cry Mrs. Gang. Your children are shocked and now they're crying too.

MRS. CHOI: It's all right. Stop it. Stand up.

MRS. GANG: (*stops weeping*) Mrs. Choi, I'm a totally useless woman. I'm just the shape of a woman. I'm less than a dog . . .

MRS. CHOI: You're more than that, without a doubt.

GUM-NYEO: Soothe your baby first.

MRS. GANG: (*gives the breast to her baby*) We're leaving for good today.

MRS. CHOI: What?

GUM-NYEO: Why have you announced that all of a sudden?

MRS. CHOI: I'm sorry. I hurt your feelings just now. Sometimes people can get upset over nothing. Just think of two families living in one house. My bark is worse than my bite.

GUM-NYEO: Mother has been over anxious about Myeong-Soo recently.

MRS. GANG: I didn't mean it.

MRS. CHOI: Don't say that.

MRS. GANG: I met my husband tonight.

SOON-DOL: Father?

MRS. CHOI: Where?

MRS. GANG: I came across him in the street when I was begging for supper.

GUM-NYEO: That's why you were late.

MRS. CHOI: This is good news anyway. But he's heartless. He left here alone and we haven't heard from him since. What has he

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been doing till now?

MRS. GANG: He's a door to door peddler, wandering from place to place. Now he has floated in here like a bubble.

SOON-DOL: Did he earn a lot of money, ma?

GUM-NYEO: Why didn't he come up?

MRS. GANG: Hush! (*Hears a song from outside*) Now he's coming.

GYEONG-SEON *enters the stage humming a tune. A little bit drunk. He carries a pack for peddling.*

GYEONG-SEON: Are all of you still all right?

MRS. CHOI: Sniffer!

GUM-NYEO: (*at the same time*) Mr. Gang!

SOON-DOL: (*rushes to GYEONG-SEON*) Pa, pa! Why did you run away? They've taken away our house.

GYEONG-SEON: You've grown since I saw you last . . . Mrs. Choi, have you tasted money?

MRS. CHOI: Tasted money? I've even tasted tiger's dung! We've lost our only way of earning a living, the straw-bag machine.

GYEONG-SEON: (*laughs*) lost the straw bag machine? (*Sings a song*) Lose one thing, lose another thing, lose the house, lose the field, lose my spirit, lose your spirit . . . (*Sees MRS. GANG who looks at him sharply*) Oh, madam, you're sitting on a golden blazing seat. What a luxurious life!

MRS. GANG: Are you drunk again! Pull yourself together now. We've known nothing but hardship.

GYEONG-SEON: Drunk? No. Smell my mouth. (*Puts his mouth to MRS. GANG's nose*) No smell. Is there?

MRS. GANG: (*pushes GYEONG-SEON. GYEONG-SEON, falls down*) Do you still have that awful habit?

Everybody laughs.

MRS. CHOI: Whenever you meet, I can see a love quarrel.

GYEONG-SEON: (*stands up shaking the dust off his clothes and says to MRS. GANG bluntly*) Don't do it to me. I haven't touched food all day.

MYEONG-SEO: (*opens the door, hears everybody laughing*) Sniffer.

GYEONG-SEON: (*tries to hide his embarrassment bashfully, laughs*) Myeo . . . Myeong-SEO.

MYEONG-SEO: (*comes out of the back room*) You should have let me know first. What are you doing in the kitchen?

THREE PLAYS BY CHI-JIN YOO

GYEONG-SEON: Oh, no. Are you still lying sick in bed? You've lost weight and look how frail you are.

Everybody laughs again while GYEONG-SEON is at his wit's end.

MRS. CHOI: Sniffer brought laughter. Now we're in a better mood. We're feeling refreshed.

MYEONG-SEO: You did a stupid thing. How could you disappear on the day of the auction? That was a cruel thing to do. You left your family without saying a word, and now you come back without letting anyone know, too.

GYEONG-SEON: (*waves*) Don't say that again. It was just like acting out of anger. I can't remember what happened. Anyway, I'm sorry, everybody. So, finally, I'll take my family tonight. It'll be a formal departure.

MYEONG-SEO: Formal departure? (*Laughs*) . . . You're just joking.

GYEONG-SEON: No, it's true. (*To MRS. GANG*) Pack your bag quickly.

MYEONG-SEO: It's not a joke?

GYEONG-SEON: No. It's serious.

MRS. CHOI: Mrs. Gang keeps saying she's going to leave here tonight too.

MRS. GANG: (*packing her bag*) Why should I stay one more night?

GYEONG-SEON: The longer the stay, the more the shame.

MYEONG-SEO: (*laughs*) . . . You've matured at last to know shame. Anyway, it's nonsense to depart during the night.

MRS. CHOI: I think you're right. Start tomorrow morning.

GYEONG-SEON: The wisest thing to do is to beat a retreat during the night in my case.

MYEONG-SEO: You're right. There's nothing to fear in this situation.

GYEONG-SEON: Yes. My hometown was a sunny spot when I had a house and field. But now, I even worry about a place to sleep.

My hometown is a gaol for me. I feel stifled in this gaol.

MRS. GANG: (*keeps packing*) We should get out of this gaol as soon as possible.

MYEONG-SEO: We're all prisoners. There is no free place in Korea. The shadow of gaol is over everybody's head.

SOON-DOL: Where are we going?

GYEONG-SEON: Who knows?

SOON-DOL: You're a fool. We've nowhere to go.

MYEONG-SEO: (*laughs*) You're right.

MRS. GANG: . . . I'm still living, thanks to you, Mrs. Choi. Without

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your help, a devil would have taken me away forever. Thank you indeed.

MRS. CHOI: You're going too far. Don't flatter me.

MYEONG-SEO: What have you been doing for a living in the last six months?

GYEONG-SEON: I have been a door-to-door peddler.

MYEONG-SEO: A door-to-door peddler?

GYEONG-SEON: You've no experience of it. It's a good business wandering from west to east, from north to south, following the wind, drifting on the waves. It's totally up to me. It's better than farming which is hard work all the year and still there's nothing but tears in autumn. The best thing about my job is nobody interferes with me. I can sleep on every street of every town, I can work under the sky. I've nothing so I don't need to worry about robbers. I feel comfortable because there's nothing to worry about. I would feel free if I died now because I feel comfortable. What a unique life!

MYEONG-SEO: All the world is at peace in your mind.

GYEONG-SEON: Yes, I always feel happy. If somebody buys me a drink and asks me to cry, I won't. Never. It's true.

MRS. GANG: It's no time for chattering. I need your help to pack the bag.

GYEONG-SEON: Pack the bag? My body itself is a big enough burden for me.

MRS. GANG: (*sharply*) Talk. Talk. Can't you see what I am doing now?

GYEONG-SEON: (*is cowed*) . . . What! Ah, yes. (*Changes SOON-DOL's clothes, reading MRS. GANG's face, says quietly to MYEONG-SEO*) It's true, Myeong-Seo. I never cry. When I met her (*points at MRS. GANG*) on the street, she was begging for food carrying a baby on her back. I felt a heavy stone in my heart. But I never cried. I kept back my tears by clenching my teeth.

MYEONG-SEO: I understand. I know how bitter your humour is.

MRS. GANG *finishes packing her belongings – clothes, blanket, pots and so on.*

MRS. GANG: (*to GYEONG-SEON*) I'll make Soon-Dol walk. You carry the baby on your back.

MRS. CHOI: I'll miss you so much. I feel lonely already. Who'll stay in our hometown if everybody leaves here and goes to Japan or

THREE PLAYS BY CHI-JIN YOO

Eastern China? I don't even know where Myeong-Soo is.
 GUM-NYEO: The baby sleeps in peace. Soon-Dol, remember this house when you return, an adult.
 MYEONG-SEO: Gyeong-Seon, don't forget your hometown where you were born and grew up.
 GYEONG-SEON: Don't you mean the town where my family were forced to leave like this?
 MYEONG-SEO: Home is home anyway.
 GYEONG-SEON: Please remember me as a human being. That's my last hope.
 GUM-NYEO: (*gives SOON-DOL a lamp*) Soon-Dol, hold this up high like a bridegroom on a horse.
 SOON-DOL: Like this?
 GUM-NYEO: Well done!
 MRS. GANG: (*to GYEONG-SEON*) Time to go. Hurry.
 GYEONG-SEON: . . . I confess to you Myeong-SEO, I feel like crying tonight. But I won't.
 MYEONG-SEO: Please give me a smile.
 MRS. GANG: (*carries a bag on her head*) Myeong-SEO, Mrs. Choi. We'll be off. Good bye, Gum-Nyeo.
 GUM-NYEO: Good bye, Soon-Dol.
 MRS. CHOI: How can you find a place to sleep on such a cold night? Do you really want to go tonight? It's too dark, no stars in the sky . . .
 GYEONG-SEON: We'll head south following the swallows. To the warm south . . .
 (*Laughs*)

SOON-DOL, *holds the lamp and* MRS. GANG *holds SOON-DOL's hand carrying a bag on her head. GYEONG-SUN follows them carrying the baby on his back. All of them go out.*
 MRS. CHOI and GUM-NYEO *see them off.*
 MYEONG-SEO *sits alone on the stage.*
Silence.
The sound of the wind.

MYEONG-SEO: (*monologue*) I feel an emptiness like after a death in my family . . .

MRS. CHOI and GUM-NYEO *enter again and sit on the edge of the floor. GUM-NYEO starts her work.*
 MYEONG-SEO *goes back to his room.*

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MRS. CHOI: (*lights a fire to cook*) We're behind in our work today.
 GUM-NYEO: We are indeed.
 MRS. CHOI: We should work all night if we are to buy some food tomorrow.

A NEIGHBOUR WOMAN *enters.*

WOMAN: Mrs. Choi, Have the Gangs gone?
 MRS. CHOI: Yes. Why?
 WOMAN: I'll curse that woman. She's left without paying her debts. She borrowed my egg money.
 MRS. CHOI: Just think, you helped them with their travel costs.
 WOMAN: Will you go to the market tomorrow?
 MRS. CHOI: Yes. I'm going to sell some straw-head pads.
 WOMAN: Can you sell my hen tomorrow? I need some money for my late husband's memorial ceremony. Mrs. Gang took the money for it. I don't want to sell a hen but there's no other way.
 GUM-NYEO: (*carrying some food from the kitchen*) Father, take this.
 MYEONG-SEO: What's this?
 GUM-NYEO: Rice soup. (*Feeds it to MYEONG-SEO*)
 WOMAN: (*sees the head-pads hanging around on the wall*) Nothing to worry about if I can make something myself. My life depends on the hen's backside. If it laid an egg a day, that would be fine. But mine do it only from time to time. That's every third day.
 MRS. CHOI: (*laughs lightly*) . . . It's not a happy life, watching the hen's backside all day. But look at my Gum-Nyeo. She sits in the room all the time making head-pads. She never sees the sunshine now.
 WOMAN: But you've a son in Japan.
 MRS. CHOI: . . . Son?
 MYEONG-SEO: . . . Hasn't the postman called on us today either?
 GUM-NYEO: There's no regular service here. He starts from the main street so sometimes he doesn't reach us until the evening.
 MRS. CHOI: (*shows the newspaper*) Look at this. Do you think it is Myeong-Soo?
 WOMAN: What is it?
 MRS. CHOI: There's a picture and the name Myeong-Soo. I can't believe this. Sometimes it looks like my son. But I'm not sure. I've got poor eye sight. I can't see this picture properly.
 MYEONG-SEO: (*finishes eating and goes out of the room*) You're off again.
 MRS. CHOI: You know Myeong-Soo's face. You were his midwife.

THREE PLAYS BY CHI-JIN YOO

And you took care of him when he was a boy.
 WOMAN: But I haven't seen him for over seven or eight years.
 Maybe he's changed a lot.
 MRS. CHOI: What do you think of this picture anyway? It can't be
 Myeong-Soo. Am I right?
 WOMAN: Why isn't this picture clear?
 MRS. CHOI: Maybe because I carry it around with me all the time.
 The ink easily fades.
 WOMAN: Well, it looks like Myeong-Soo but then it looks like a
 stranger in some ways . . . I can't tell.
 MRS. CHOI: That's it! I can't believe it either. I'd rather believe the
 sky will fall down soon. It's a horrible story!
 WOMAN: Horrible story?
 MRS. CHOI: No! It's nonsense! Myeong-Soo is the last man to do such
 a thing!
 WOMAN: What did the newspaper say? Please tell me.
 MRS. CHOI: . . . Well, I can't remember. Gum-Nyeo, what's the word
 for what Myeong-Soo did in this paper?
 GUM-NYEO: Please stop it, mother.
 WOMAN: Please tell me the story. I'm a close friend.
 MRS. CHOI: I feel uneasy. Please tell me one more time what the
 Village Head Man said.
 GUM-NYEO: The Village Head Man is a liar.
 MRS. CHOI: How do you know?
 GUM-NYEO: I asked his friend about him. Myeong-Soo did a
 respectable thing. He wanted to get a better life rather than die
 in this mud hut.
 MRS. CHOI: He deserved to do that.
 GUM-NYEO: But his plan was discovered by the police. So he's in jail
 now.
 WOMAN: Oh, dear!
 MRS. CHOI: Is it true he got a life sentence?
 WOMAN: Life sentence?
 MRS. CHOI: (*firmly*) It's not true! Definitely!
 GUM-NYEO: No, It's not true.
 MRS. CHOI: It's unthinkable! A life sentence means that he can't be
 set free while he's still living. He has a long life ahead of him.
 It's unbelievable! No sudden misfortune has happened to my
 son. The Village Head Man said this is my son Myeong-Soo,
 who is in the newspaper, but I don't believe him. So many
 people have the same name and a similar face in the world. No,
 it's not true!

THE MUD HUT

GUM-NYEO: Stop it, mother. I'm worried you're getting sick. If
 Myeong-Soo is killed in jail, there is nothing to grieve over. He's
 our pride. He fought for us. It's a respectable. And Myeong-Soo
 never forgot this mud hut which he grew up in. He must come
 back here to rescue his sick father and old mother and help me,
 a young girl. He'll achieve great success and visit this mud hut
 soon. He worked twice as hard as any other man when he
 gathered firewood, doing farm work seven years ago. Can you
 imagine what he is now? He has become a hero.
 MRS. CHOI: Yes! He was very strong and brave! I can't imagine what
 he is like now! Maybe I won't even recognise him . . . Oh, my
 son Myeong-Soo! I feel that he'll be back here soon and call out
 to me in a heroic voice. His feet will crunch the gravel, and he
 will take my thin wrist in his strong hands . . . Then this mud
 hut will be bright.
 GUM-NYEO: You're right, you're right. Not only here but all starving
 Korea could be bright . . . You can stop selling head-pads in this
 cold weather.
 WOMAN: I could stop watching the hen's backside.
 MRS. CHOI: Gum-Nyeo, we can't meet Myeong-Soo looking like this.
 Our faces are dirty . . . And this house is too humble to meet
 him in. Gum-Nyeo, let's clean the house and wash our faces. We
 should not be meeting him now. Come here. Comb your hair.
 Do we have hair oil? Light a lamp. When a guest comes, the
 house should be bright.

*GUM-NYEO feels fear while watching MRS. CHOI hurrying around.
 The sound of wind.*

 MRS. CHOI: Gum-Nyeo, What are you doing? Hurry up! Loosen your
 hair. I'll light the lamp.
 GUM-NYEO: (*watches MRS. CHOI anxiously*)
 WOMAN: I understand her. I'm feeling anxious too.
 GUM-NYEO: She's so concerned about Myeong-Soo. She often gets
 like this these days. But today it's more serious. I think she's
 gone . . .
 WOMAN: No! Don't imagine such things. Why don't you comfort
 her? You're the one person who can make her feel comfortable.
 GUM-NYEO: It's useless trying to console her. And I don't know what
 to say. I just hope she will get back to normal soon.
 WOMAN: You're right. How can words do any good? It's useless. It's
 salt on the crab's back. (*To MRS. CHOI, who lights the lamp*)

Don't worry and stop thinking about Myeong-Soo. You'll get sick. *(Goes out)*
 MYEONG-SEO: *(peeps onto the stage)* What has happened? What makes you so busy?
 MRS. CHOI: A guest is coming.
 MYEONG-SEO: A guest? Are you all right? Be serious. You're tempting fate.
 MRS. CHOI: You be serious. A guest will come tonight.

The sound of wind.

POSTMAN: *(voice only)* Hello.
 GUM-NYEO: *(surprised)* Oh, dear.
 MYEONG-SEO: *(embarrassed)* What is it?
 POSTMAN: *(voice only)* Is there somebody here?
 MRS. CHOI: Gum-Nyeo, it's Myeong-Soo, isn't it? Can you hear? Oh, Myeong-Soo, my son, he has come back now. He has returned home at last. *(To MYEONG-SEO)* I didn't lie.
 MYEONG-SEO: . . . It's strange.
 POSTMAN: *(voice only)* Hello!
 MRS. CHOI: Gum-Nyeo, open the door! Hurry!
 GUM-NYEO: I'm afraid, mother.
 MRS. CHOI: Silly girl, come with me.

MRS. CHOI and GUM-NYEO go to the door apprehensively.

POSTMAN: *(voice only)* Who's Myeong-Seo Choi?
 MYEONG-SEO: Have you come from Japan?
 POSTMAN: *(voice only)* Yes.
 MRS. CHOI: From Japan?

POSTMAN enters the stage. He carries a parcel.

POSTMAN: No house number on this house.
 MRS. CHOI: . . .
 POSTMAN: Sign here please.
 MYEONG-SEO: Sign?
 MRS. CHOI: *(to GUM-NYEO suspiciously)* He's not Myeong-Soo, is he?
 GUM-NYEO: It's the postman.
 MYEONG-SEO: *(disappointed)* Heavens above!
 POSTMAN: Take this parcel. Don't be so stupid! Sign here now.

MYEONG-SEO: *(resistant)* I've no pen.
 POSTMAN: Seal it with your thumb, then.
 MYEONG-SEO: *(seals with his thumb with trembling hands and THE POSTMAN goes out)*
 MRS. CHOI: Myeong-Soo sent this to us.
 MYEONG-SEO: What is it?
 MRS. CHOI: I had a feeling this morning that somebody would come. That's it. You said I tempted fate but. . . .
 MYEONG-SEO: *(checks the sender's name, laughs)* It's not from Myeong-Soo. Sam-Jo has sent this.
 MRS. CHOI: What has Sam-Jo sent? We haven't heard from him for a long time. *(Opens the parcel)*
 GUM-NYEO: *(with a look of real surprise)* Oh, no!
 MRS. CHOI: *(she cannot believe her eyes)* . . . This . . . is . . . a man's bone . . . Oh, no . . . What has happened . . .
 MYEONG-SEO: *(looking blank in dismay, she reads the letters on the box)* The . . . skeleton of. . . MYEONG-SOO . . . CHOI.
 GUM-NYEO: Brother's?
 MRS. CHOI: Oh, the newspaper article was true. Oh no . . . What has happened? Myeong-Soo, why are you returning home as bones? *(Weeping)*
 GUM-NYEO: Myeong-Soo! *(Bursts into tears)*
 MYEONG-SEO: I've drudged all my life like an animal. I never made even one complaint. Why has this happened to my son? You bastards! *(Tries to stand up)*
 GUM-NYEO: *(wipes her tears away)* Father!
 MYEONG-SEO: Take me away. Where is Myeong-Soo? Who can support this ruin of a house? Where is he?
 GUM-NYEO: Father! Father!
 MYEONG-SEO: *(puts the box away, tottering)* Why send me only bones? Take it back to the man who killed my son! *(Exhausted, he falls down and with the bones and skeleton falling across the floor, he starts coughing)*
 MRS. CHOI: *(picks up the bones)* Myeong-Soo, my son, you've come back to your birth place, this mud hut. You've returned to us anyway. Now I've nothing to worry about and no need to cry all night during the winter. Myeong-Soo, you've come back to my bosom at last.
 MYEONG-SEO: I don't want this. Tell them to go back.
 GUM-NYEO: Don't let go of yourself, father. Carry on and be patient. Myeong-Soo never let us down. I'm sure his soul is still alive to take care of us. Bear up.

THREE PLAYS BY CHI-JIN YOO

MYEONG-SEO: *(as if murmuring)* Myeong-Soo, hold my hands. I can't stand alone.

MRS. CHOI *collects MYEONG-SOO's bones and prays.*
The sound of the wind breaks the silence.

CURTAIN

The Donkey

In One Act
(1935)

CHARACTERS

CHOO-AM: A man in his sixties.
MR. GANG: CHOO-AM's friend
MRS. CHOO: CHOO-AM's wife, in her early thirties
SOON-HI: A neighbour woman
YOUNG MAN: SOON-HI's nephew

ACT I

A small house in the countryside, belonging to CHOO-AM who was once a noble man. There are two adjacent rooms on the stage, with small windows in each room. There is an outside door on the wall of the room to the right.

When the curtain goes up, MRS. CHOO, a beautiful young woman, is sitting in her room, on the left-hand side of the house. There is a workbox in front of her. She stares with fixed eyes and wipes her tears away. In his room, on the right-hand side of the house, CHOO-AM lies on the floor, sick. MR. GANG, CHOO-AM's friend, a thin, slow-speaking old man, is reading a book to CHOO-AM. There is the sound of strong winds outside. It is a gloomy winter's night.

CHOO-AM: *(a frail person, squeezing out his voice because of a bad cough)* It's time to be gone. . . . My cough's getting worse. . . .

MR. GANG: *(stops reading and holds CHOO-AM)* You, Choo-Am. . . . Pull yourself together and get out of your bed. You're ill because you're always lying down. *(Tries to hold CHOO-AM up)*

CHOO-AM: *(raises his head)* Hold up my head Gang.

MR. GANG: Yes. *(Holds CHOO-AM up)*

CHOO-AM: *(sits still)* Why does the wind sound so strong? Maybe a catastrophe will happen. Don't you think tonight's weather is very similar to the night when the tragic Great Rebellion against Foreign Imperialism broke out.

MR. GANG: Well that's nothing to worry about. As the proverb goes, a hard winter makes a good harvest.

CHOO-AM: That's not my concern. Before the Great Rebellion, I had property and a good status. At that time, I was level-headed enough to discuss the present situation. After the situation reversed, I didn't care if the Day of Judgement came within a week. Now I live alone in the mountains. . . . Nothing is my concern.

MR. GANG: Politics is politics but your family affairs are serious, too. How can you lead your daily life as if you were having a quarrel everyday. Make peace with your 'young' wife. There's nothing worse than a lover's quarrel. What good will it do to separate, using different rooms in this small isolated house in the mountains?

CHOO-AM: *(with difficulty)* It's all right. . . . Nobody ever died of loneliness. Please visit me from time to time. That'll be enough for me.

MR. GANG: Loneliness is not important. For one thing, you're too old to die of loneliness. Do you feel free? It's uncomfortable for me even to borrow matches from your wife. It's like entering another person's house.

CHOO-AM: Well, it'll be finishing soon . . . I'll die soon. . . . I know I'm a hopeless case. My illness is not so simple.

MR. GANG: (*smiles bitterly*) You're better than that. You've been fighting bravely against the illness for the last ten years. You'll see off your illness like a creditor does. Old people always manage to do that.

CHOO-AM: (*with confidence*) Well, to die is easy. The most difficult thing in the world is to live. That's the only difficulty in my life.

MR. GANG: Yes, but you can. Pull yourself together. We'll have to live a long time to see the liberation . . . So make it up with your wife. Hurry!

CHOO-AM: Compromise? It's too late. There is a high solid wall between her and me. . . . I became aware of it during this quarrel.

MR. GANG: What do you mean?

CHOO-AM: Think about it. She is thirty, but how old am I? Sixty-one. Thirty and sixty-one . . .

MR. GANG: So what?

CHOO-AM: That's the wall I mentioned. Her world and my world are blocked by this wall. I feel my life ebbing away now but what is she thinking? Maybe how to live from now on. . . . To die and to live . . . (*Laughs in a lonely way*) It's a big gap! Big gap.

MR. GANG: (*holds CHOO-AM who is agitated*) Choo-Am! What are you doing? You tried your best to carry on living up until yesterday. But what's changed between today and yesterday?

CHOO-AM: I did that. But today I realise that I'm merely a weak old man. I'm facing the real facts. I've sold my medal of honour, formal suit, and paintings already. I've sold everything that's worth anything. I've nothing now. One of my legs is already in the coffin. (*Getting angry*) What can I do? What can I . . .

MR. GANG: Don't say it.

CHOO-AM: (*alone*) It's insane . . . Why did I beat her! Why did we quarrel?

MR. GANG: It wasn't anything serious. You just threw a wooden pillow at her. . . . It's very common in that type of situation.

CHOO-AM: You know nothing. I should forgive her in any case. I should pretend not to notice if she does something serious.

MR. GANG: What?

CHOO-AM: You don't know. Nobody in the world knows but me.

MR. GANG: What do you mean? Are there any secrets between you two? Tell me. Then I'll know.

CHOO-AM: (*points to the MRS. CHOO's room*) That woman did . . . How dare she! I can't carry on.

MR. GANG: What did she do?

CHOO-AM: She had an . . . affair.

MR. GANG: An affair? Be sensible. You're still in high society. Don't be silly. I can't possibly believe that.

CHOO-AM: Yes, it's true! I saw it in person! I saw it with my own two eyes!

MR. GANG: Did you?

CHOO-AM: (*nods his head*) . . . Just the day before yesterday. I was lying here tired after supper. I think I fell asleep immediately . . . I heard a knocking sound, half-awake and half-asleep. I was frightened when I heard that sound . . . What was it? It seemed like I was watching a horror scene in my dream. So I kept completely still holding my breath like a child. I heard somebody's shoes dragging on the ground from the next room going outside. I sprang up at last and opened the window. Then . . . Can you imagine what I saw? . . . That damn woman! That idiot woman and a young man were embracing each other.

MR. GANG: (*surprised*) Your wife really did that? It can't be true!

CHOO-AM: (*tries to calm down*) . . . Uh-huh. I could ignore it if that was all. But . . . that damn woman . . . I couldn't stand the way they were whispering to each other.

MR. GANG: What did they say?

CHOO-AM: (*he responds immediately as if he has missed MR. GANG's words and is talking to himself*) It was as if somebody had hit the back of my head. She made me go mad.

MR. GANG: What exactly made you go mad? What did you hear?

CHOO-AM: It's impossible to repeat it. One short sentence threw this old fellow right off course . . .

MR. GANG: I understand you at last. That's why you had that terrible fight with your wife the day before yesterday . . . Why you threw the wooden pillow so violently . . . (*Sound of wind for a while*)

CHOO-AM: What's this getting old? Why do people become old men and women? Because they give up their desires one by one. I've no desires now. . . . I don't think my wife ever really loved me even once. I know she'll leave here after my death. But I believe that she'll take care of my funeral arrangement at least.

THREE PLAYS BY CHI-JIN YOO

(*Angrily*) But . . . but . . . that damn woman did . . . Oh, that knocking sound is still in my head. . . .
 MR. GANG: Choo-Am . . . (*Holds CHOO-AM up*)
 CHOO-AM: (*as if possessed by a devil*) The day before yesterday. . . . night time . . . at the same time as today. . . . from outside . . . tap, tap . . . tap . . . tap (*somebody knocks on the window*)

Everybody feels tense. A picture frame in CHOO-AM's room drops to the floor.

CHOO-AM: (*surprised*) What's happening!
 MR. GANG: Who is it? (*Opens the window and looks outside*) Is somebody really knocking? There's nobody there . . . (*Peeps into MRS. CHOO's room*)

The small door of MRS. CHOO's room silently opens halfway.

CHOO-AM: (*takes the wooden pillow and just about manages to moan*) He's coming again!

MR. GANG: I can't see anyone.

CHOO-AM: Yes, he's coming. I'm sure of it.

MRS. CHOO: (*finishes sewing and packs a bag. She makes up her face in front of the small mirror. When the small door opens, she moves to the door spying on CHOO-AM to see how he is. CHOO-AM suddenly opens the door between the two rooms*)

CHOO-AM: (*shouts*) Where are you going?

MRS. CHOO: (*greatly surprised*)

CHOO-AM: (*insanely*) Bitch! What are you doing? Who are you meeting tonight?

MRS. CHOO: (*scared*) Wh . . . what?

CHOO-AM: Bitch! Don't play the innocent! (*Tries to throw the wooden pillow*)

MRS. CHOO: (*hides herself*) Oh, no!

MR. GANG: (*restrains CHOO-AM quickly*) Stop it. Something serious will happen. (*An old woman enters, and she stands between CHOO-AM and MRS. CHOO*)

SOON-HI: (*slyly*) What are you doing now? It's me, Choo-Am. I want to borrow something.

CHOO-AM: (*stares at SOON-HI deliberately*)

MR. GANG: Take a good look, Choo-Am. This is Soon-Hi. (*Laughs*)

CHOO-AM: No. (*Looks outside*) He's hiding.

MRS. CHOO: (*jumps on CHOO-AM*) Nonsense! What makes you so

THE DONKEY

angry? Why? Do I need your permission just to meet a neighbour?

CHOO-AM: (*corners her, arguing*) Where is he? Where's that young man!

MRS. CHOO: (*with a threatening look*) What? A young man? Did you introduce me to him once? Why don't you believe me? Find the young fellow now. How can you suspect me? (*Shouts*) Find him!

SOON-HI: Don't be silly, Mr. Choo. A young fellow? No, it's me. I'm here to borrow something. . . . If you don't believe me, have another look outside. . . . I don't want to be involved in this kind of trouble.

CHOO-AM: (*looks outside*)

SOON-HI: There's nobody there, is there?

MR. GANG: Just stop. There's nobody.

CHOO-AM: (*to MRS. CHOO*) But who was he? You met him two nights ago. I know you promised to run away from here to live with him. You're a bitch! Do you really hunger for a man so? How can you live with a farm servant. I saw him with my own eyes. You bitch, he's Mr. Yoon's servant, isn't he?

SOON-HI: You're not making any sense, Mr. Choo.

MR. GANG: Calm down, Choo-Am. You're sick. Don't do that.

CHOO-AM: No! Get away! (*Rushes to MRS. CHOO*)

MRS. CHOO: (*attaching herself to CHOO-AM*) Kill me! Beat me to death! You mean I should serve an old man all my life? It's unfair. I've already served you for ten years. What more do you want?

CHOO-AM: What?

MRS. CHOO: (*shouts*) Oh, dear. . . . You've had all my youth these last ten years on this mountain. My life is hopeless. Is it not that enough?

SOON-HI: Calm down, Mr. Choo. Please think about my situation.

CHOO-AM: You've no sense of honour. I understand everything at last, why you've been going out so often recently. You've been deceiving me all the time. You're a bitch! You're a shameless bitch!

MR. GANG: Calm down, Choo-Am. Stop it. What are you doing? You're an educated person.

MRS. CHOO: Kill me!

CHOO-AM: All right, I'll kill you if you insist. You bitch . . . (*When he starts beating MRS. CHOO, CHOO-AM starts to choke and cough. CHOO-AM, falls on his face holding his chest*)

MR. GANG: (*holds CHOO-AM up. CHOO-AM lies down in his room*) Oh, no! Do you hear me Choo-Am?

CHOO-AM: (*lying down*) Oh, I feel hurt. Get me some water, please . . . Kill her now right away. I don't want to see her any more.

MR. GANG: (*takes care of CHOO-AM*) Don't be angry. What a shame at your age . . .

SOON-HI: (*gives CHOO-AM a glass of water*) Here. Have some water.

MR. GANG: (*takes CHOO-AM some water*)

MRS. CHOO: (*crying in her room*) No . . . no . . .

CHOO-AM: (*starts to cough again while he is drinking the water*) Please kill that bitch for me . . . I hate the thought that I might have to see her again . . .

MR. GANG: Take some opium to get over your cough. (*Grinds CHOO-AM's opium*)

MRS. CHOO: (*keeps crying*) It's terrible . . . so terrible . . . I'm sick and tired of living like this . . . It's hopeless . . . (*Crying*)

MR. GANG: (*feeds some opium to CHOO-AM*) Your cough will get better after taking this. (*MR. GANG lays CHOO-AM down*)

SOON-HI: (*goes to MRS. CHOO's room quietly*) Oh, no. Mrs. Choo, why are you crying? You should get used to holding back your tears if you're to live in this hard world.

MRS. CHOO: (*sharply*) Get away! I hate you . . . You planned . . . everything. You took a key role in it. You did!

SOON-HI: Did I? Me? Be sensible. You said many times that the young fellow is your favourite man. That's why I planned it all. He's a sort of nephew of mine so I asked him to accept your proposal . . . How come you blame me now in spite of my effort to help you? I can't make sense of it. Pull yourself together. You must go your own way according to your will. That's the best way.

MRS. CHOO: What's the good of that? What's my way? I'm tired of my life . . .

SOON-HI: Mrs. Choo, just stop and go and pack your bags. We've no time. He asked me to tell you what time you're leaving. He'll be here soon. What can I do if he comes now? Don't rock the boat. (*Looks outside and nervously into another room and goes out*)

CHOO-AM: (*lying down*) I don't want to die . . . I won't die for her . . . Nobody shows me the least kindness these days . . . I can't die in this state . . .

MR. GANG: All right. Make yourself comfortable. You need to sleep now. I fully understand you.

MRS. CHOO: My life is going to waste on this mountain. That's my destiny.

CHOO-AM: Try to stay alive anyhow . . .

MR. GANG: You should. That's certain. Everybody tries to keep alive. That's a basic human instinct. Don't give up. Do your best to keep alive, Choo-Am.

CHOO-AM: Human life should be worth more than just keeping alive. Above all, it should be clear and have some meaning to it and people should be able to make their own life.

MR. GANG: You said human life should be clear and . . .

CHOO-AM: Sure. That's the basic element of human life, and the desire to live and die is next.

MR. GANG: Yes, you're right. That's the most important thing.

CHOO-AM: But what am I? I feel wary . . . wary of death. . . I shouldn't have beaten her . . . What was the point? I'm a dog. A dog-like man. (*Wipes his tears away*)

MR. GANG: What are you doing Choo-Am? Try to have a good sleep. Opium will make you feel better. A sleep will refresh you. I'll draw the curtain.

CHOO-AM: I'm a dog . . . Just like a dog . . . (*His voice trails away*)

MRS. CHOO: (*murmuring*) Shouting, fighting and sleeping together . . . Pretending to love each other but always thinking about something else. . . That's what being a husband and wife means? Marriage is the grafting of trees together. Nobody can do that perfectly even with green fingers.

MR. GANG: (*looks at CHOO-AM's face, to himself*) He's sleeping soundly at last . . .

SOON-HI: (*enters*) I don't sense his approaching yet.

MR. GANG: (*goes to MRS. CHOO's room*) What a marvellous drug! I fed him just a little bit, and he's fallen asleep already.

SOON-HI: Don't take too much of it. Something serious could happen. What would we do if he slept the eternal sleep?

MR. GANG: (*laughs*) It would make me free. . . Take care of Choo-Am while I go and get some medicine for him in the town. (*To MRS. CHOO*) Please make peace with Choo-Am. Both of you should stop being so stubborn. He hasn't long to live.

SOON-HI: That's it. When I was young, yes it was thirty-seven years ago, I was beaten by my husband day-after-day. I really hated him then. But I felt a great sorrow at his deathbed. My tears flowed like a waterfall. I lost my voice and I couldn't talk for almost two weeks. I couldn't even eat.

MR. GANG: How about now? Can you eat again now?

SOON-HI: The sound of rain is like his voice moaning in my ear. He was so miserable in his last days . . . On rainy days, I still cry all

night thinking of my late husband.

MR. GANG: (*smiles*) You should have shown him your true feelings before his death. I won't be long. I'll be back before Choo-Am wakes up.

SOON-HI: Come back soon. It's time for me to go home.

MR. GANG: (*opens the door*) Oh, it's so cold and windy . . . I think we're going to have a snowstorm. (*Goes out*)

SOON-HI: (*keeps waiting while MR. GANG goes out and then quietly walks to MRS. CHOO*) Hurry up, be sharp, Mrs. Choo! It's time to go! Nobody is here. You can't go once Mr. Gang comes back. The chance is gone if Choo-Am wakes up! Hurry! Oh, dear . . .

MRS. CHOO: I promised him I would leave here, but I . . . can't.

SOON-HI: No, Mrs. Choo, don't be silly! You're sick and tired of living here, aren't you? Choo-Am is always sick and grumbling. . . . Ten years is more than enough. People can't keep young forever. Listen carefully to my words. There is no harm in obeying an old person's advice. If you want to leave here, do it when you're still young. Beauty and strength never lasted forever.

MRS. CHOO: I hate this house but it has suddenly become attached to my mind. I've touched this wall more than a thousand times . . . I can smell my flesh and soul here. . . . How can I give up my last ten years? And God planned my life as Choo-Am's wife. I don't expect anything better if I leave here.

SOON-HI: Why are you suddenly such a weak-willed woman?

MRS. CHOO: I hope to have a better life. No doubt about it. But I can face myself now. I know what the problem in my life is.

SOON-HI: What?

MRS. CHOO: I used to blame people for what I am now. But, it was all my fault. I couldn't refuse when my parents sold me to my husband. If that wasn't what I wanted, I shouldn't have accepted. That is why it's my fault. This is my destiny. It's impossible for me to resist my destiny. I'll take it with me to my death.

SOON-HI: You're a sorry sight, Mrs. Choo. Be sensible. Think about your husband. If he dies soon, that's no problem. But an old man's illness never finishes simply. If his illness lasts some years, it means that you'll get old. What will you do without a husband and money at that time? Nobody will show any sympathy for you. Everything will be useless. Neighbours treat Choo-Am well, because he was a respected man. But after he has gone, there'll be endless creditors coming to this house. They'll take away everything. Can you stand a widow's life being pressurised by creditors? Tonight is the best time to leave. Here is a young

man. You like him. You can't fight it. Pack your bag now.

MRS. CHOO: The big age difference between Choo-Am and me has brought me many problems. How can I take a man younger than me? I can borrow some money but not youth. . . . I feel sorry for him. I can't go.

SOON-HI: Don't you trust that young fellow? Don't worry. He's mature and he's witty, energetic young man. He can manage a life with you easily. There's no doubt about it, he's better than you think.

MRS. CHOO: I didn't mean it. But . . .

SOON-HI: But why do you say that? You fell passionately in love with him and gave him a solemn promise. What's the matter with you? Are you still thinking about your old husband?

MRS. CHOO: No. I don't think about my husband. I love the young man, it's true. But . . .

SOON-HI: What?

MRS. CHOO: I've decided to keep living here. I'll live here with the fighting, shouting, and the beatings, the crying and the weeping. . . . That's my life. There is no better place for me. I know what life has in store for me.

SOON-HI: Stop being childish. Listen. Don't miss this opportunity. Choo-Am will wake up. Where's your bag? I'm worried someone will come . . . (*A donkey's bell tinkles in the far distance*) Oh, someone is coming. Did you hear a horse's bell? Who is it? (*Opens the window*) It's too dark outside, I can't see anyone. Is it a traveller? Hurry up! He's coming here. Maybe he's lost his way on the mountain. Your chance has gone! (*The bell sound is getting closer*)

MRS. CHOO: Is this . . . him?

SOON-HI: Well . . . But he doesn't have a horse.

MRS. CHOO: Oh, I can't hear the bell any more.

SOON-HI: (*looks outside quickly*) Be quiet! It's him. (*Beckons to the YOUNG MAN*) Come here! Yes, it's all right. Don't worry! Hurry! (*The YOUNG MAN enters. A well built man about twenty-eight years old*)

YOUNG MAN Is Choo-Am in? Is he in the next room?

SOON-HI: Be quiet! He's sleeping like a log. He took some opium.

YOUNG MAN (*brightly*) That's good. Hurry. I've stolen my master's donkey. That's why I'm late. I was afraid you'd have some bags. Did you think I wasn't coming?

MRS. CHOO: . . .

YOUNG MAN: What are you doing now? It's horrible weather.

THREE PLAYS BY CHI-JIN YOO

There's going to be a snowstorm. We must hurry!
 SOON-HI: Oh, dear. You can't leave in a snowstorm. Ride this donkey and leave here quickly! Nobody will discover you.

MRS. CHOO *stands still*.

SOON-HI: Be sensible! You've no time!

YOUNG MAN: (*puzzled*) Aunt, what's happened?

SOON-HI: I don't know. She was quarrelling with Choo-Am when I arrived here. After that, she said she'd changed her mind.

YOUNG MAN: What do you mean?

MRS. CHOO: (*quietly*) I'm sorry. I can't go.

YOUNG MAN: (*never expected*) You can't? Really? And then what am I to do?

MRS. CHOO: Go back to your life. We don't know each other . . .

YOUNG MAN: Are you joking? How can we do that? You can't send me back.

MRS. CHOO: . . .

YOUNG MAN: (*confidently*) You can't do that. We can do nothing but leave here. Our story has spread widely already in town. If the village heads know this, we're lost. We'll become a laughing-stock for all the people, and finally they will drive us out, you and me. We can't stay here any way.

MRS. CHOO: I don't care if they make fun of me. I deserve to be punished for what I've done.

YOUNG MAN: (*angrily*) To be punished? What for? We agreed to find our own way. It's our life. We've the right to decide our own way? What kind of punishment is there for doing this? Don't be silly! We're innocent!

SOON-HI: Choo-Am will wake up. Don't shout. (*Peeps into CHOO-AM's room on tenterhooks. CHOO-AM turns around*) Be quiet! Choo-Am lie the other way round.

YOUNG MAN: I don't mind! I'm very serious. I'm not a playboy. I really want to have my own life. I've dreamed about it all my life and today is the first day of my new life. How can you say 'no' so easily? You promised me that you would stand any kind of hardship with me. But what are you saying now? How can you send back all my luggage? How about the donkey? And what am I to you? Yes, you're making fun of me. You make a fool of me in front of the town. How can you do that? Yes, I've no hope now. I can't live in this town any more. I can't even go back to my master. Who has made me like this? (*Holds MRS. CHOO's*

THE DONKEY

arms firmly as if threatened)

SOON-HI: (*stops YOUNG MAN*) What are you doing? Stop it. (*To MRS. CHOO*) Mrs. Choo, stop that stubbornness. Stand up. It's time to go. You promised. Don't break your word. You said you deserve to be punished for what you have done, but you have promised.

A promise is a promise. You can't hesitate even a minute. Hurry!

MRS. CHOO: (*to herself*) . . . People should keep to their word . . .

SOON-HI: That's it. You've said it in person and now you should keep to that.

YOUNG MAN: I don't want to go with you by force. I'm sure we can make a better life in another town. That's what I want to say. That's all.

SOON-HI: Right. Try to find a better place for yourself. This is a gloomy place to live in. I heard you came from a poor family. People say a young man can understand a young woman's situation. It takes a poor person to know a poor person's difficulties.

YOUNG MAN: (*strokes MRS. CHOO*) Let's go now. If we go at all, be happy. Let's stand up. (*Helps MRS. CHOO to stand. MRS. CHOO, stands up gently*) We've lived for other people for such a long time. But from tonight, we'll make our own life. Maybe a perfect chance like today will never come again as long as we live. Let's make a decision. We're still young!

SOON-HI: Yes, you're young enough. Help each other. You can do everything.

YOUNG MAN: (*opens the door*) . . . The wind is still strong. But we can see the sunshine tomorrow. . . . The barley harvest will come soon. . . . A skylarks will be singing at that time. . . . (*Laughs*)

SOON-HI: You're right. The birds will be singing in the sky. Stop talking and leave here quickly . . . The donkey is shivering with cold.

YOUNG MAN: Where's your luggage? Load it onto the donkey.

MRS. CHOO: (*shows the YOUNG MAN her bag*) That's all.

YOUNG MAN: Just your body . . . (*Smiles*) That's fine. . . . I'll go out first to bring the donkey here. (*Goes out*)

SOON-HI: (*follows the YOUNG MAN*) . . . Both of you can start a new life from today . . . A new life . . . (*MRS. CHOO goes out following SOON-HI*)

The donkey's bell rings outside. SOON-HI says a parting farewell. The sound of the bell becomes familiar. CHOO-AM, who had woken up

THREE PLAYS BY CHI-JIN YOO

earlier, peeps into MRS. CHOO's room. He's getting angry but tries to suppress his feelings. When he sees MRS. CHOO leaving, he is extremely agitated and falls down.

CHOO-AM: (*controls his temper hearing the sounds of the donkey's bell and when the sounds fade, he holds up his head and says quietly*) She has gone . . . Gone away . . . (*Lonely laugh*) Huhu . . . Well done. It's unfair for her to stay beside me, a living corpse. She must make her own life . . . A young woman should wear a colourful dress . . . What remains for me now? Nothing . . . Nothing at all . . . (*Murmuring these lines in a weak voice, he finds opium under his pillow and looks at the opium for a while*) I feel comfortable with this . . . Opium! The drug for a better sleep! (*Laughs*) . . . I can take a rest at last. Now I can go freely . . . I tried my best to live while that young woman stayed with me. But it's hopeless now. . . . I can't live any more . . . (*Grinds the opium then grumbles while making his bed*) I married a girl to make myself young . . . But an old man should go his own way . . . It's time to go the way of death . . . way of death . . . (*Lights a candle calmly, drinks the opium and lies down on the bed, with only the candle alight on the empty stage and the sound of wind. Pause.*)

MR. GANG: (*comes back with medicine for CHOO-AM, feeling uneasy*) Where are you? Is anybody here? Where's Mrs. Choo? Oh, she took off her old clothes. Yes, she's gone at last. (*To CHOO-AM*) Choo-Am, wake up! She's gone! Choo-Am! Time to wake up, Choo-Am! (*Sees the opium grinder*) No, he took all of it! (*Keeps silent for a while, listening to the sound of a donkey's bell in the far distance*) What's that? (*Laughs quietly as if thinking of something*) You're sleeping the eternal sleep. You've made yourself comfortable forever. (*The sound of the wind accompanied by the sound of a donkey's bell once again.*)

CURTAIN

Sean O'Casey and I

by Chi-Jin Yoo
Dong-A Ilbo (*Dong-A Daily*) 1935.7.7 - 7.10

I. Introduction

I came under the influence of many playwrights directly and indirectly during the my studies. Especially I cannot forget such names as John Millington Synge, Anton Chehov and Sean O'casey. Sean O'Casey - he shows me the way to be a playwright.

In some aspect, my works are merely a rough imitation of his plays. I have deep rooted admiration for O'Casey. The main purpose of this article is to research O'Casey's life and art.

I am delighted to have an opportunity to introduce him to the Korean reader.

II. Sean O'Casey's career

Sean O'Casey was born in 1884 in a slum of Dublin. His family was extremely poor,¹ so he could not go to school till sixteen. He hardly knew A from B.²

When he was sixteen, somebody asked him about Irish history. He felt shy because of he could not answer anything at all.³ He decided to start self-study, spending the days in the field and the nights at his books.⁴ From that time, he could read and write for the first time. When he was a boy, he sold newspapers for a living. After that, he became a railroad worker and changed from job to job, such as a factory worker, road worker, a construction labour and so on.⁵ For these reasons, he was not able to spare enough time to study. But in these days, he is superior to W. B. Yeats, an Irish National Poet, in understanding the traditional Irish Gaelic.⁶

(Ireland was dominated by the British Empire for six or seven hundred years so their language disappeared a long time ago.

O'Casey never used Gaelic in daily life.) He made great progress in his studies, to be conversant with a dead language, Gaelic.⁷

It was ten years ago when he published his first work.⁸ O'Casey, then a Dublin pedlar,⁹ happened to see a show in the Abbey theatre.¹⁰

The very next day, he realised that the Abbey theatre was a very important cultural space for the Irish and that the whole staff of the Abbey were trying their best to establish an Irish National Theatre.

At last, O'Casey had a mind to be a playwright.¹¹ After that night, he watched every production at the Abbey with the cheapest tickets. It is true that his dramaturgy came from the balcony seats of the Abbey theatre.¹²

His first play *The Shadow of a Gunman* (2 Acts) was performed on 12th April 1923 at Abbey Theatre.¹³ Up to then, O'Casey had proposed some plays to the Abbey theatre eight times and been rejected.¹⁴ His ninth trial finally made a success. Lady Gregory selected his play, *The Shadow of a Gunman*. From that time to now he has published four full-length plays and two one-act plays. His best plays are *Juno and the Paycock* and *The Plough and the Stars*. Sean became a famous playwright in Ireland and all over the world after the first performance of *Juno and the Paycock* in 3rd March 1924 at Abbey Theatre.¹⁵

After the death of the great playwright J. M. Synge, the Irish Theatre Movement went into a decline. The audience decreased day by day, it was the hardest era of the Abbey Theatre. Then, a hero was suddenly appearing from the working class – it was Sean O'Casey. W.B. Yeats, who was admired as 'the Father of Irish Theatre Movement,' sent a letter to O'Casey recalling the hardest era, 'If we cannot get your new play, *The Shadow of a Gunman*, the Abbey theatre will be dissolved.'

O'Casey's debut made a big impact in Irish theatre. He was a hero who saved the Irish Theatre Movement.¹⁶

III. The features of Sean's works

This is the complete works of Sean O'Casey.

1. *The Shadow of a Gunman* (2 Acts)¹⁷
2. *Cathleen Listens In* (One Act)¹⁸
3. *Juno and the Paycock* (3 Acts)¹⁹
4. *Nannie's Night Out* (One Act)²⁰
5. *The Plough and the Stars* (4 Acts)²¹

6. *Confession* (3 Acts)²²

7. *The Silver Tassie* (4 Acts)²³

I have heard that O'Casey published another full-length play *Within the Gate* in these days, but unfortunately I have had no chance to read it.²⁴

O'Casey is not a prolific writer. He wrote only one play per year or less. Whenever he published new plays, O'Casey tried to put some new element in his plays. For example, he had a success with some farce like scenes – this was unusual in Modern Theatre – in *Juno and the Paycock*.²⁵ In *Plough and the Stars*, O'Casey had another hit hiding the main plot off stage.²⁶ In *The Silver Tassie*, O'Casey tried to attach some songs to the play.²⁷

In my opinion, the most brilliant feature of his work is the farce-like scenes in *Juno and the Paycock* that he picked out and modernised. As is well known, farce is a type of performance with a long history. The Satyr in Ancient Greece would be the first on a list. *Comedia del' arte* flourished in the Middle Ages, and many great playwrights such as Molière and Shakespeare developed farce and wrote some masterpieces.

Sean O'Casey intended to revive farce by gathering audiences from a variety of classes.

In fact, many first-theatre-watching audiences crowded to the Abbey Theatre after *Juno and the Paycock*. According to A. E. Malone's remark, 'The new theatre comer phenomenon corresponds to the appearance of Sean O'Casey.'

I already mentioned that O'Casey studied theatre in the balcony of the Abbey Theatre. For that reason, he realised what common people wanted in theatre. Farce, slapstick and clown-like performance are all time favourites of the common people, rather than tragedy and comedy. If Charlie Chaplin deleted his slapstick and clown-like acting, there would be no world-wide fame like today. This is Chaplin's best weapon.

O'Casey put farce-like elements in his plays, but it is not for making people laugh but for drawing out tears. Everybody burst into laughter whenever they watched O'Casey's plays, but being drenched with tears spontaneously.²⁸ I can pick out many scenes in his play as examples, but there is no room for it in this article.

To make a long story short, the main feature of his plays is the

mixture of laughter and tears. He provoked laughter at the first half of the play and turns it into an explosive tragic situation.

O'Casey skilfully detached these two contrasting elements; tragedy – inner structure of the play – and farce – the exterior of the play.²⁹

John Acade's comment on *Juno and the Paycock* that 'The tragic element of this play is only for twenty minutes. Another two and half an hours are full of illogical farce.' But O'Casey himself named this play as 'a tragedy' so it is not difficult to guess what was his intention.

O'Casey draws his subjects from slum life in Dublin.³⁰ He shows us the hard life of the Irish working class under the British colonial government – poverty, disease and illiteracy. The Irish are eking out a scanty livelihood. While O'Casey describes the miserable life of the Irish, he does not suggest a clear solution. His works are widely different from other radical proletarian plays.³¹ On the contrary, in some aspects, he is indifferent to social problems. For this reason, O'Casey inherits the Irish pessimism that was expressed by Lennox Robinson, Murray, St. John Irvine and the legendary J. M. Synge.

There is sadness throughout O'Casey's plays. It brings the audiences to feel serious sorrow. In the meantime, O'Casey suddenly throws in a joke, the mood quickly changes. This kind of harmony – sadness and wit – pushes the audience into an endless nihilistic world. Nihilism is one of the basic mode of O'Casey.

O'Casey himself is a proletarian and his works are based upon the practical, real life of Irish labourer. But poverty itself kept him from being a proletarian writer.³² He lost the sight in one eye as a result of poverty.³³

IV. Sean O'Casey and Me

As I wrote this article, I found that so many characters in my plays are similar to O'Casey's. First, I point out the characters who represent the humorous side.

1. Pangbo in *Tomak*.
2. Sungchil the music teacher in *Budnamu-sun-Donglieui-Punggyung*
3. Yusun-abum in *Binminga*
4. Gangnoin in *Dangnagui*
5. Maldongi, munjini, Woosami in *So*

All the above characters are on the whole the same as Seumas in *Shadow of a Gunman* and Boyle, Joxer in *Juno and the Paycock* except for some small differences. Depressed slum life is the main part of my plays. I try to mix a bit of farce-like element in my play to draw out the audiences' tears in laughter. This unskilful effort of mine is vivid evidence that my works came from O'Casey's works. I used some epigrams in lines that also came from O'Casey's influence.

I tried to imitate *Juno and the Paycock* in these days. In my new version *So (The Cow)*, I have an ambition to make the whole audience laugh during the performance and finish the show with sorrow, just as audiences held their sides with laughter for two and half hours and tasted twenty minutes tragic mood in *Juno and the Paycock*. When I described slums, I hid the main conflict of the play off stage as in *The Plough and the Stars*.

In this article, I research O'Casey's strong influence on me in dramaturgy and writing technique. But I accepted not only dramaturgy and writing technique but also ideology. The enormous nihilism in my works – which always haunted my plays like a shadow; Is it the same as O'Casey's nihilism?

NOTES

1. Sean O'Casey was born in 1880 not 1884 into a respectable middle-class family whose fortunes declined severely during his early years. Undoubtedly he and his family suffered considerable hardship, but at no time did they live in the overcrowded, disease-ridden Dublin slums as recounted by popular legend and repeated by respectable academics.
2. O'Casey was to tell Lady Gregory, when he was in his early forties and beginning to make headway with his plays, that he had not been to school until he was sixteen and up till then had not learned to read and write.

Michel Casey, Sean's father, did not send his children into the national school system, which would have been free, but to the fee-charging Central Model Schools where they could grow up among their middle-class peers.

In 1888, his family moved to a two-room attic flat in St Mary's School, where his sister Isabella worked as a teacher. From Dublin records it can be established that during Bella's tenure of her teaching post at St Mary's, Sean began attending school there. Even he, in an unguarded moment in his early seventies, admitted his presence there, and recalled in a genuine rather than fabricated memory being promoted from wearing a red and black plaid petticoat, to trousers. The records show that his attendance became more regular with the years, and that his standard of reading, arithmetic and spelling was satisfactory. But Sean missed many classes, and when he was present, his eyes were frequently bandaged. In 1890, Sean briefly attended St Barnabas' School. But he had benefited enormously from his qualified sister's constant presence. She tutored him at home and he could read, even on his own

admission, the stories in *The Boys of London and New York*.

3. I could not find any credible proof about it. I think Yoo quoted this episode without academic research.
4. It is a direct translation from Korean text. This above expression is an idiom in Far East countries.
5. Sean's first job was a stock boy at Hampton & Leedom, wholesale chandlers in Henry Street, and worked there for over a year from 1894. In 1896, he worked as a van boy for Eason and Son, wholesale news agents in Lower Abbey Street, but was dismissed after one week for disobedience. In 1903, he began to work as a common labourer on the Great Northern Railway of Ireland, and remained at this job for the next nine years. In 1920, Sean worked as a janitor at the Old Forester's Hall.
6. In 1906, O'Casey recognized Irish National identity and joined the Drumcondra Branch of the Gaelic League for the first time. He studied Irish language from that time and gaelicized his name to Sean O Cathasaigh.
To compare Yeats with O'Casey, Yoo intentionally emphasized that O'Casey is a successful 'self-made' man.
7. In this article, Yoo did not refer to O'Casey's joining and organizing Irish National Movement. To write that matter was too dangerous in order to pass the censorship of the Japanese Colonial Government.
O'Casey attended the Gaelic League regularly for some years before becoming himself an official in the organisation. He was also developing a taste for the sport of hurling, although poor eyesight was unlikely to help him. In 1907, O'Casey joined the St. Laurence O'Toole Club and in 1908 he became the Irish Republican Brotherhood Secretary of the Drumcondra Branch of the Gaelic League. In 1911, O'Casey joined Jim Larkin's Irish Transport and General Worker's Union. In 1914, he served as Secretary of the Irish Citizen Army, resigning in October.
8. Before he wrote his first play *The Harvest Festival* in 1919, O'Casey already published some articles and books. In May 1907, O'Casey had published his first article, 'Sound the Loud Trumpet' in *The Peasant and Irish Ireland*. In June 1912, he began to write articles for Jim Larkin's *Irish Worker*, in May 1914, he began to write a regular column, 'By the Camp Fire', for the *Citizen Army* in the same magazine. In 1918, he published *Songs of Wren No.1, No.2 More Songs of the Wren-Humorous*, and under the name of Sean O Cathasaigh. O'Casey's reputation as a pamphleteer grew in Dublin through advertisements and readings. Three seven or eight-page booklets of his songs, so called because of an old Irish Song, attributed to earlier rebels known as the Wren Boys, were in various stages of preparation.
In 1919, O'Casey wrote *The Story of the Irish Citizen Army*.
9. Sean O'Casey was not a pedlar. See footnote 5.
10. In mid-December 1916 O'Casey's friend William Kelly and his wife took O'Casey to the Abbey Theatre to see *Blight; The Tragedy of Dublin* by Oliver St John Gogarty and Joseph O'Connor. This was the one of the first plays O'Casey claims to have seen at the Abbey Theatre.
11. O'Casey had some theatre experience already. In 1894 his brother Isaac had constructed a stage in the sitting room, and here the brothers, together with neighbourhood friends, began to act out plays. Isaac began to take part in charity performances, for example one at the Cofee Palace, Townsend Street, which included scenes from Boucicault's *The Shaughraun*, as well as a minstrel show and part of Shakespeare's *Henry VI Part 3*. Isaac had been assigned the

role of Richard of Gloucester in the last, and wanted Sean to play the victim-to-be, Lancastrian King Henry.

In 1895, O'Casey acted the role of Father Dolan, the patriotic priest, in *The Shaughraun* at the old Mechanics Institute Theatre in Abbey Street, which nine years later was rebuilt as the Abbey Theatre. O'Casey later confirmed in a letter that, 'It was a wonderful revelation. Then, it seemed the world was lit by footlight.'

O'Casey himself performed at a 'Concert and Play' organised in November 1917 by the St. Laurence O'Toole Dramatic Club to raise funds for 'Meals for Necessitous Children of the Poor'. In the production of Thomas K. Moylan's *Naboblish* (Never Mind It) at the Empire Theatre, now the Olympia, O'Casey appeared as a dim-witted English tourist, a part singularly unsuited to his thick Dublin accent.

12. Since his first play were rejected in 1920, O'Casey had made further visits to the Abbey Theatre. Joseph Holloway, the diarist of the Dublin theatre, records O'Casey telling him in 1923 that he had seen and liked Daniel Corkery's play *The Labour Leader*, produced in September 1919, dealing with Jim Larkin's leadership during the 1913 lockout, and in his autobiography O'Casey admits to seeing a play based on a short story by James Stephens. O'Casey became a regular visitor to the Abbey around 1923.
13. 'It was indeed a welcome and wholesome sign to sit in the Abbey last night and listen to an audience squirming with laughter and reveling boisterously in the satire which Mr. Sean O'Casey has put into his two-act play. Not for a very long time has such a good play come our way. It was brilliant, truthful, decisive. . . . His characters were as perfect, and his photographs, was nothing less than the work of genius.' *Evening Herald*, Dublin, 13 April 1923.
The Shadow of a Gunman was staged for four performances at the end of the season; author's royalties amounted to four pounds. O'Casey continued to work as a labourer till 1924.
14. In January 1920, the Abbey Theatre rejected O'Casey's first two plays, *The Harvest Festival* and *The Frost in the Flower*. In April 1922, they rejected *The Seamless Coat of Kathleen*, and did not accept *The Crimson in the Tricolour* in September. In 1921 October, Lady Gregory sent O'Casey a letter, and criticism of *The Crimson in the Tricolour* advising him 'to cut out all expression of self and develop his peculiar gift for character drawing'.
15. In my opinion, O'Casey got the world-wide fame after the planned demonstration led to a riot against *The Plough and the Stars* at the Abbey on 8 Feb 1926. The Irish nationalists were not likely to condone what they considered a 'studied insult to the men of the 1916 rising, and an outrage perpetrated on the banners of the Citizen Army and Volunteers'. The stage was stormed, speeches of protest were made, stink-bombs fouled the air, the police were called in, the demonstrators left the theatre and the performance continued.
Yoo avoided this issue on purpose. Nationalism was a very dangerous topic in Korea at that time at any rate.
16. The Abbey Theatre for many years had been scarcely able to keep its box-office afloat in very rough financial periods. It was true that civil war and a politically disturbed community did not provide an ideal environment for the arts, but this was only half the reason. Wretched management and a poor sense of play selection helped to drive the audience away. Three individuals exercised control over the Abbey's theatrical fortunes, Yeats, Lady Gregory

and Lennox Robinson. Each was to play an important role in the life of Sean O'Casey.

'In the evening to the Abbey with W. B. Yeats, *Juno and the Paycock* – a long queue at the door, the theatre crowded, many turned away, so it will run on next week. A wonderful and terrible play of futility, of irony, humour, tragedy. When I went round to the green-room I saw Casey and had a little talk with him. He is very happy.' *Lady Gregory's Journals 1916–1930*, p.74

On the strength of *Juno and Paycock's* success O'Casey became a full-time writer and joined the Society of Authors.

17. It opened at the Abbey Theatre on 12 April 1923
18. It opened at the Abbey Theatre on 1 October 1923
19. It opened at the Abbey Theatre on 3 March 1924
20. It opened at the Abbey Theatre on 29 September 1924
21. It opened at the Abbey Theatre on 8 February 1926.
22. This title came from Korean translation. It is impossible to trace the original play which matched this title, *Confession*. O'Casey wrote *The Silver Tassie* in 1928, there is no record that he had written 'another' play during the period 1926–1928.
23. After the riot against *The Plough and the Stars* in 1926, O'Casey decided to leave for London, where he had just been awarded the Hawthornden Literary Prize for *Juno and the Paycock*. He sent his new play *The Silver Tassie* to the Abbey from London. On 30 April, the very day his son Breon was born, O'Casey received news from Lady Gregory that the Abbey directorate had rejected *The Silver Tassie*, and public controversy ensued.
- On 11 October 1929, *The Silver Tassie* staged at the Apollo Theatre, London. The first week's receipts broke the box-office records, but the show closed after eight weeks, largely due to the slump brought on by the Wall Street Crash.
24. O'Casey published *Within the Gates* in December 1933. It opened in London at the Royalty Theatre on 7 February 1934.
- There has been Korean translation of *Within the Gates* till now, and it was not easy to get a original copy of it in 1935. In 1937, In-Sup Jung, a drama critic and poet, visited Dublin and had a interview with Yeats. Jung's article 'Visiting the Irish Theatre World' was published serially in *Samchuli* magazine from January 1938 to April 1938. It was the sole 'direct' contact between Korea and Ireland in 1930s and 1940s.
25. 'Students of Sean O'Casey generally agree that his plays describe a course of technical development from naturalism to expressionism.
- 'Only O'Casey, for whom pain and foible, comedy and tragedy were inseparable, could have composed a scene of such bitter hilarity and then left it to lurch and cackle round our skulls.' Benedict Nightingale, *New Statesman*, 17 October 1980.
26. 'Here is a dramatic device of the utmost brilliance. It enables O'Casey to bring the romantic rhetoric right into the heart of the action without letting the action be dominated by it as would happen if he showed us the meeting itself. At the same time the setting of the Voice of the Man outside the room expresses perfectly the distance of the dreamer from the common people. They share his aspirations enough to be moved by them when they hear them enunciated, but the effect is transitory.' Jack Lindsay, *Sean O'Casey Review*, II, 1976, p. 192–93.
27. 'Personally, I think the play is the best work that I have done. I have certainly

put my best into it, and have written the work solely because of love and a deep feeling that what I have written should have been written . . . Most of the Second Act is to be sung. A good deal to Gregorian chant, and some to the airs of songs and a hymn. . . . There's no mention of politics throughout the play.'

O'Casey, letter to Lady Gregory, 28 Feb. 1928

28. 'O'Casey creates a unique and diversified world, a human comedy, as well as an incisive theme. Once he establishes his controlling theme he moves freely and even discursively around it, playing tragi-comic variations on it, developing broadly through an ensemble of characters rather than closely through a few central characters. The structural pattern of his plays is loose not tight, contrapuntal not dialectical.
- 'O'Casey's world is chaotic and tragic but his vision of it is ironically comic. It is in this war-torn world of horrors and potential tragedy that he finds the rowdy humour which paradoxically satirises and sustains his earthy characters; . . . And it is clear that O'Casey himself enjoys his people no less for their follies, as he intends his audiences to enjoy them.'
- David Krause, *Sean O'Casey; The Man and His Work*, London, 1960 p. 66–80.
29. 'In a turbulent world crowded with these broadly comic spirit often dominates the action. But O'Casey would have it so precisely because the humour in his plays reveals a native vigour and shrewdness in his characters which ironically becomes a means of survival in a shattered world. It is this attitude which keeps his plays from becoming melancholy or pessimistic. His humour saves him and his characters from despair. In the midst of anti-heroic laughter there can be no total catastrophe. Where there is suffering and death no happy endings are possible, but where there is also laughter life goes on.' Krause, *ibid*.
30. O'Casey's lines in his early plays — the so-called Dublin Trilogy — were famous for their practicality. He picked up words and expressions from living Dubliners at his time.
31. In the 1920s and 1930s the Korean Proletarian Theatre performed any way they could, insisting and propounding a Bolshevik theory of popularization. They wanted to build a communist country. Their performances were full of incendiary political propaganda remarks.
32. Sean O'Casey declared himself 'a Communist'. He sent a letter to his friend Dick Madden and said, 'People make the mistake of thinking that Communists are idealists. On the contrary, we are realists'. His ideology was reflected in *The Star Turns Red* (1940) and *Red Roses For Me* (1943).
33. It is true that O'Casey suffered to bad eyesight through the life but never lost the sight in one eye. I guess that this uncorrect information of Yoo's article came from misunderstanding the English expression 'half blind'.